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Thursday July 23, 2015

Tour de France

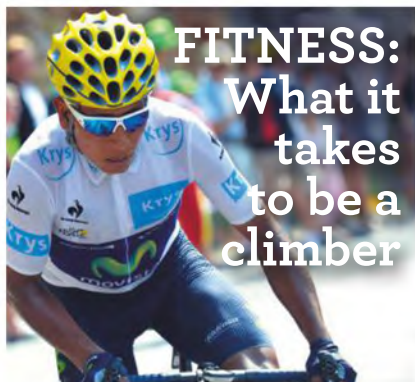
- Heroic win for Cummings
- Team Sky under fire



Froome soars in yellow

Lance Armstrong back in France

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Tour de France 2014

OFFICIAL RACE REVIEW DVD

Cobbles, crashes and a new campione: the 2014 Tour de France proved to be one of the most dramatic editions of the race in recent years.

While pre-race favourites Chris Froome – the defending champion – and Alberto Contador both crashed out, Astana's Vincenzo Nibali rode flawlessly to become Italy's first Tour champion since 1998.

Nibali led the race for all but two days, and produced four dominant stage victories on the road to Paris. His first came on stage two in Sheffield, which formed part of the spectacular Grand Départ in Yorkshire and attracted millions of people to the roadside.

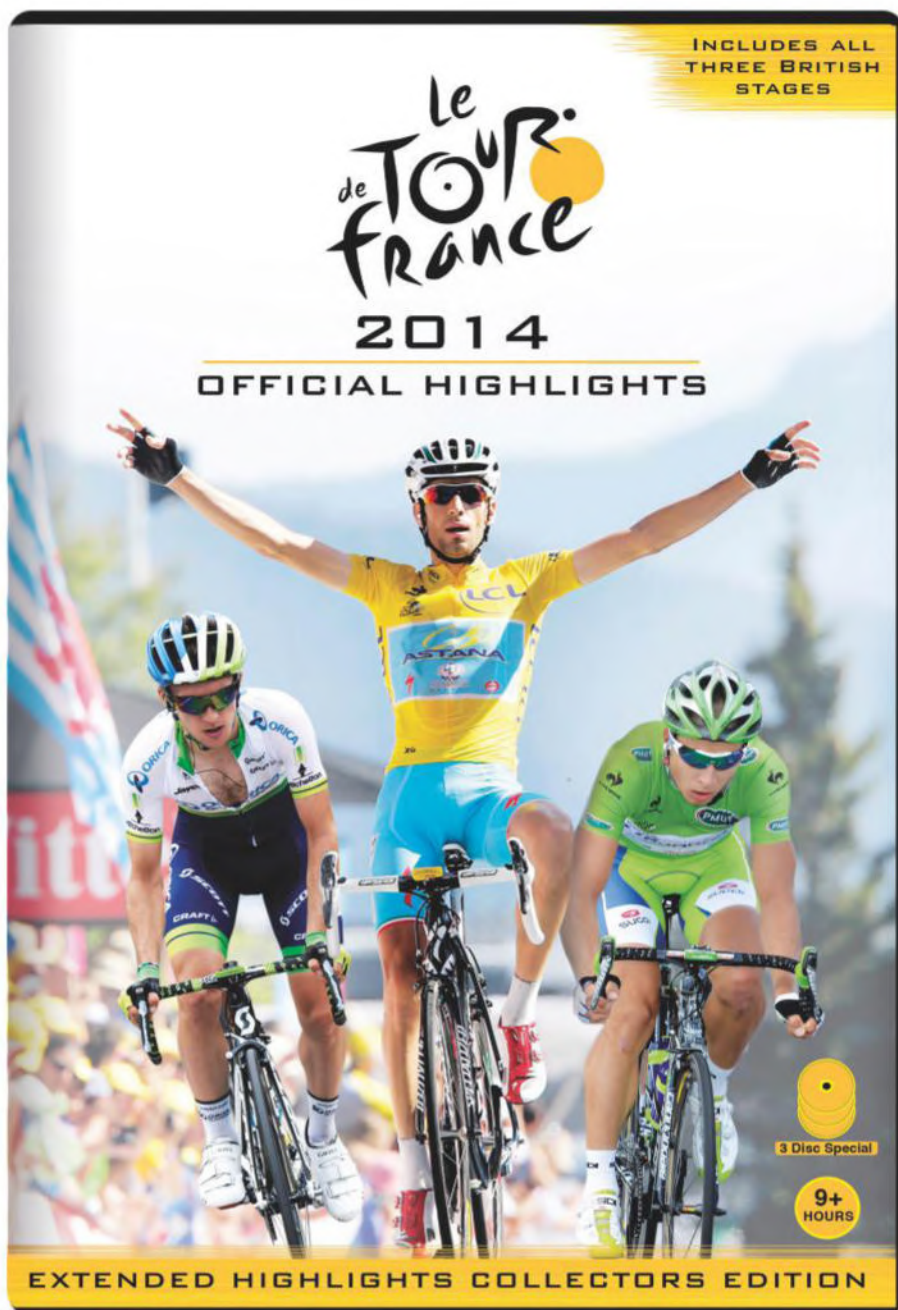
Not even the race's inclusion of some of the famed cobble sectors from the iconic Paris-Roubaix one-day race on stage five could slow him down, and when the race hit the mountains he was unstoppable.

Elsewhere, France found new heroes in Jean Christophe Péraud, Thibaut Pinot, Romain Bardet and Tony Gallopin, and the likes of Matteo Trentin, Rafal Majka and Ramunas Navardauskas all won thrilling stages.

The 2014 Tour de France created legends and stories that will live on for years - and here's your chance to relive them again.

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Focused Froome powers through the vitriol

Chris Froome just can't catch a break. In 2012 when a rush of blood to the head saw him attack his then leader Bradley Wiggins, he was gently vilified as the relationship between the two broke down. Now, as he rides towards a second Tour win the innuendo and doping allegations are flying around the Kenyan-born Brit like never before.

Not even during Armstrong's faux reign did the vitriol reach these rather uncomfortable levels. What is it about Froome, a polite, well-spoken, inoffensive man that brings this on? Is he seen as a soft target? Is it the uber-officious Team Sky way that the French seem to dislike? Or is it his rapid rise from obscurity to Tour contender?

Meanwhile, Alberto Contador rode to Giro victory without a mention of doping, and Alejandro Valverde could yet ride himself onto the Tour's podium. Both riders have been banned for doping during their careers.

Froome's rivals are also making him look good. Contador looks exhausted, while Vincenzo Nibali is miles off of last year's form. Quintana meanwhile lost most of his deficit on stages one and two.

All in all, it's not so unbelievable, crucially there's no smoking

gun, and most importantly; Froome hasn't won yet.

Simon Richardson,
acting editor



Photos: Graham Watson

Contents

News

- 8 Sky come under attack
- 10 Steve Cummings wins stage 14
- 12 Lance Armstrong shunned by fans
- 14 Nairo Quintana's Canyon
- 16 Tour twins: the Yates brothers
- 18 Things to do this week
- 20 Ian Bibby wins Ryedale GP
- 22 GB success at Euro Track Champs

Tech

- 60 Do you need carbon soles?
- 62 Nine products road-tested
- 64 Vitus Vitesse Evo ridden and rated
- 66 Our pick of water bottles

Fitness

- 68 How to boost your glutes
- 70 The science of climbing
- 74 My fitness challenge: Andy Birdsall
- 76 Science, recipes and plans

Regulars

- 24 Big question, plus your letters
- 78 Insider's guide: Tour of the Cornfields
- 82 We ride with Torphins Typhoons
- 88 Race results
- 96 Doctor Hutch
- 98 Icons of cycling: Vigorelli Velodrome



Tour de France

- 29 Froome takes control
- 32 Stage 10: Tarbes > La Pierre-Saint-Martin
- 36 Stage 11: Pau > Cauterets

- 40 Stage 12: Lannemezan > Plateau de Beille
- 44 Stage 13: Muret > Rodez
- 48 Stage 14: Rodez > Mende
- 52 Stage 15: Mende > Valence
- 56 Stage 16: Bourg-de-Péage > Gap

Sky and Froome under attack

Anti-Sky sentiment grows in France

Nick Bull in Gap

While Team Sky's rivals faltered in week two of the Tour de France, Chris Froome and his team-mates came under fire from other directions.

Froome had urine thrown in his face during Saturday's stage to Mende, while Richie Porte was punched, Luke Rowe spat on, and unopened drink cans were reportedly thrown at team vehicles during last week's stages.

Froome and Sky's outstanding performance as the race hit the Pyrenees led to speculation from some quarters in the media and public that the team is doping.

"I just want to thank the thousands

and thousands of supporters we have had out there supporting the race," said Froome. "Unfortunately it's a few individuals who are ruining it for everyone else."

Tour race director Christian Prudhomme told fans: "If you don't like a rider, shut up or don't even come."

Sky's bus was guarded by six police officers and Froome had a chaperone ahead of Sunday's stage in Mende.

Even then, an elderly spectator in a Festina cap labelled Richie Porte a doper as he went to sign on that day.

Independent testing

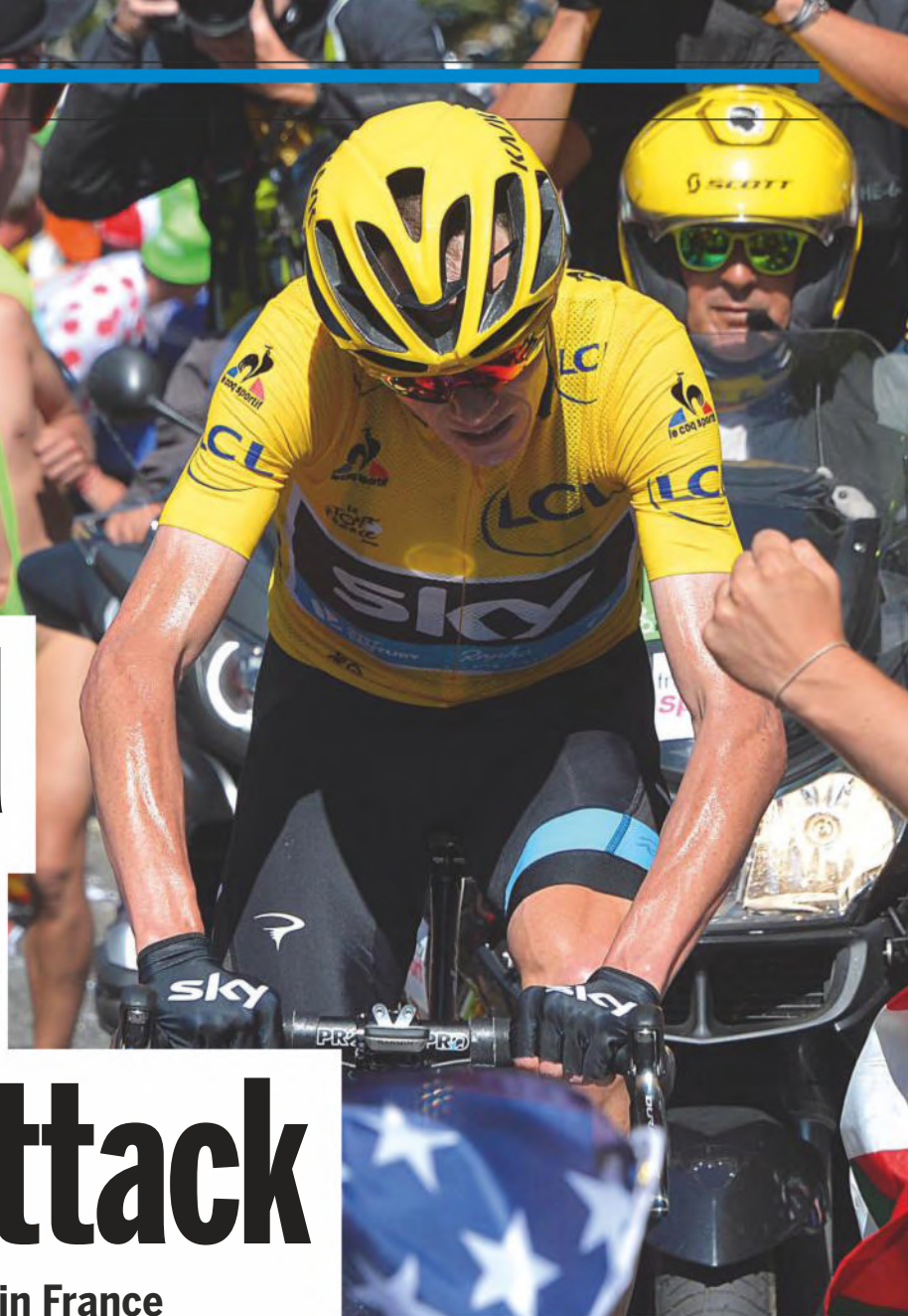
French sports daily *L'Équipe's* front page last Thursday ran with the headline 'All against Froome', which followed the

release of two videos which have been used by critics of Team Sky to question Froome's credibility.

After team principal Sir Dave Brailsford reported on the race's first rest day that he believed Sky had been the victim of data hacking, a video showing Froome's Tour stage win atop Mont Ventoux in 2013 with his alleged real-time performance data overlaid was published on YouTube. The second, similar video was of a 2014 Vuelta a España stage.

"You can see the effects of the supposed leaked file that went out there, that's done nobody any good," said Froome. "It doesn't prove one thing or another."

Froome admitted that he's considering





Froome's grip on yellow jersey tightens

Sophie Smith in Valence

Chris Froome dealt his maillot jaune rivals what some considered as good as a fatal blow in the second week of the Tour de France.

The 30-year-old, who was already in the yellow jersey, made an immediate statement in the Pyrenees where he attacked within the final 6.5km of the first summit finish atop La-Pierre-Saint-Martin to put more than a minute into his adversaries.

Froome has since extended his healthy lead with dominant displays, to leave him over three minutes ahead of Nairo Quintana (Movistar) and Tejay van Garderen (BMC) going into Tuesday's second rest day.

"I'm in a really good position going into the last week. At this stage, I'd say Nairo is my biggest rival, he's definitely shown to be the strongest of my rivals on the climbs and I expect that's going to be the same in the Alps," Froome said.

Geraint Thomas and Richie Porte also stood out in the Pyrenees, with Porte catching Quintana to finish second behind Froome on stage 10. Thomas was a constant force in helping Froome, while also keeping himself in the top 10 overall after three days in the Pyrenees and the following transition stages.

"It's a phenomenal start really for Froomey and me personally as well," Thomas said. "To have a great few days in the Pyrenees was massive, even I didn't expect that of myself. I wanted to improve on the climbs, as I've said year on year, and it's great to continue that progression."

Sky were vigilant in the transition stages, chaperoning the yellow jersey at the pointy end of undulating races in mostly searing heat. Porte and British national champion Peter Kennaugh were both ill, with the latter withdrawing from the race.

"I'm on my second round of antibiotics now. It's not ideal but I can feel I'm getting better and better," Porte said before stage 15 on Sunday.

"It's a little bit easier mentally I think when you know there are only four days of the mountains to go."

taking independent physiological tests after the Tour to prove he is racing clean. It's a bold gesture, but one that that may not appease everybody.

Former pro turned French television commentator Laurent Jalabert called Froome's win atop La-Pierre-Saint Martin as "uncomfortable to watch", while Sky's Peter Kennaugh confronted convicted doper Michael Rasmussen over comments the Dane made about the team's performances, upon his arrival at the Tour as a journalist last Saturday.

Despite declining to name names, Froome attributed the unpleasant fan behaviour to how some sections of the media had covered the Tour.

He said: "I would blame some of the

reporting on the race, that has been very irresponsible. Those individuals know who they are and they are individuals. It is not all the media."

MY VIEW...

Nick Bull

Cycling Weekly news writer

Despite everything thrown at them — literally in some cases — during the race so far, Sky's staff say the atmosphere within the team is the best it's ever been during a Tour de France. Chris Froome's strong press conference performances have helped that.



From Merseyside to Mende

How Steve Cummings took his Tour stage

Nick Bull in Mende

“I’m quite pleased.” That was the understated assessment of the Wirral’s Steve Cummings upon winning the biggest race of his career last Saturday in Mende.

The 34-year-old used his experience and took advantage of hesitation from home favourites Thibaut Pinot (FDJ) and Romain Bardet (Ag2r-La Mondiale) in a three-way contest to win stage 14 of the Tour de France following a day-long break.

It was Cummings’s and his wildcard invite MTN-Qhubeka team’s first Tour de France stage victory, and fittingly for the South African squad, it came on Mandela Day.

“When I won a stage in the Vuelta [in 2012] I thought ‘if I did it there, why can’t I do it in the Tour?’,” he said.

“It’s not that straightforward, because you need a team to give you the opportunity — they have been super, giving me a free role and leaving it to me.”

Measured effort

Although the stage finale, which included the three-kilometre, 10 per cent average Côte de la Croix Neuve climb, seemed better suited to a number of established *grimpeurs* in the 20-man escape, it was Cummings’s patient, measured effort that won him the day.

He added: “I wasn’t the best climber, I wasn’t thinking about the victory, I was just thinking about the effort and arriving at the top of the climb at my limit, rather than blowing halfway up.

“There were a lot of climbers in that group who

are better than me. But I didn’t allow myself to get excited, just time trialled the climb.”

“With 400m to the finish,” added the former team pursuit world champion, “it’s hard for a climber to stay on the wheel of a track rider.”

His victory continued MTN’s successful debut Tour, which has seen Eritrean Daniel Teklehaimanot wearing the polka-dot jersey and the team place six of its nine riders in at least one stage top-10.

“We came in to win a stage and lead a competition,” said team manager Brian Smith. “And with the number of top 10s we’ve had, it’s been a perfect two weeks for us.

“Once Steve was in the break, I didn’t really worry that there were 20 others guys there. It doesn’t matter in the Tour de France — if we’ve got Edvald [Boasson Hagen] or Steve in there, they’ve got the prowess to win a stage.

“People say to me the French messed up,” added Smith. “That’s not true. Steve won it; they were up against a superior and more intellectual rider.”

MY VIEW...

Hugh Gladstone

Cycling Weekly news editor

“Steve Cummings is a master of playing to his strengths at the sharp end of a race. His effort on the climb was pragmatic and perfectly measured. As was the case when he won a stage at the 2012 Vuelta, the killer blow came in the speed and commitment with which he delivered his attack.”





Last chance saloon for Cavendish

Sophie Smith in Valence

Mark Cavendish has one remaining shot to add to his tally at the Tour de France this year after being unable to capitalise on the second to last opportunity for sprinters in Valence on Sunday.

Cavendish finished more than 15 minutes down on winner and long-time rival André Greipel (Lotto-Soudal), blaming poor health. It was Greipel's third victory of the race thus far.

Cavendish did not take questions but made a statement sitting on the steps of the Etixx-Quick Step bus after the race.

"I was up last night with diarrhoea," said the 30-year-old. "It's a shame because I was going good the last couple of days, and guys, who I would usually outlast, were just riding past me on the first hill.

"After 30 kilometres it was about trying to survive the day really. I'm still in the Tour de France and looking forward to trying to get to Paris."

Greipel has had his own misfortunes, losing team-mates through injury, including chief pilot Greg Henderson, and also suffered from heatstroke and a crash in the days before his hat-trick, but managed to prevail nonetheless.

"I'm in really good condition, plus I have a really good team to support me for the sprints," Greipel said. "Confidence is also a nice part of what we are doing. I would prefer if Greg was still here, and to have the full lead-out train to help me, but I think we still made the best out of the situation. I was in the right moment, in the right spot and had the power to get to the line."

The German conceded defeat to Peter Sagan (Tinkoff-Saxo) in the green jersey contest, however, after the Slovak made it into two consecutive breakaways to mop up key points. The three-time competition winner led the classification by 89 points after Monday's stage.



The unforgiven?

Armstrong's French fundraiser met with indifference

Nick Bull

Lance Armstrong's return to the Tour de France last week created plenty of media attention but little else as his road to redemption met mainly with apathy.

Armstrong joined former footballer and fellow cancer survivor Geoff Thomas and his team on the One Day Ahead ride, in which fundraisers are riding the entire Tour route 24 hours ahead of the professionals to raise money for Cure Leukaemia.

The Texan joined the fundraising effort to ride the routes of stages 13 and 14 across the Massif Central, despite UCI president Brian Cookson calling his involvement "disrespectful."

Armstrong said: "Part of me would prefer to be at home chilling with my family. This is not easy. But I didn't come over here to launch a PR campaign for myself."

On Thursday's ride, in particular, spectator interest in the event was minimal. "I don't think there were any members of the public there at the start in Muret, certainly,"

said the *Telegraph's* cycling correspondent Tom Cary.

"But there was certainly a big media interest, maybe 50 journalists and TV crews.

"There was a big scrum outside the bus, just like the old days, when Lance emerged for the first time."

Love him or hate him, Armstrong's involvement in the ride has given the worthy cause plenty of publicity. A spokesperson for the charity said the ride has raised around £600,000 of a £2m target by the end of 2016.

Armstrong acknowledged that it was partly his legacy that a suspicion of doping has surrounded Chris Froome.

"I know what that is like for a guy like Chris to be in the Tour, to deal with the constant questions...to be honest, a lot of that is my fault," Armstrong told Sky Sports News.

"People see his style, they see his performance, they see the time gaps, they see the cadence and they think, 'He's just another one of them'.

"I feel bad about that. Whoever is winning the Tour in 2015 should not be answering questions about someone who won it 10 or 15 years ago."

Guest column

Thomas Voeckler



"When you solo to the finish; you can try to explain it but really it's a personal moment — it's so difficult for words to do it justice"

The Tour de France is all about the people on the side of the road. France is cycling's heartland and when you're in the break in the Tour the crowd helps keep you going like nowhere else.

There it is something special. It's something else. The crowds allow you to surpass the moment; your legs are hurting and you have gone as far as you think you can go, but then you stop thinking about it all. You've transcended — that's the word. But that only works at the front of the race and when you're really fighting for something.

I love to look back on 2012 when I won into Bagnères de Luchon and on the final climb, the Col de Peyresourde, when I broke away and I knew I was going to win the stage. I still get the shivers when I think about it now. You're almost in a second state — a communion with the public. There's always so much noise. That moment when you get to the finish, solo; you can try to explain what it's like to people but really it's a personal moment, what you're feeling then. It's so difficult for words to do it justice.

Last Tango in Paris

That time when I took the yellow jersey in St Flour in 2011 remains the biggest ever day of my career. I'm 36 now, and other riders look out for me. In 2004 the peloton let me end up in the yellow jersey, but in 2011 I went out to try and win it, and I no longer think that I have the capability to force my destiny like that among the other teams. I'm probably not going to wear the yellow jersey again in my career.

Personally, I feel a lot of pressure because I know there aren't many Tours de France left for me to race. So of course I want to animate the front of the race — I like it there — and when I look back on my career I want to say that I enjoyed the 2015 Tour de France and I didn't have any regrets.

In a career that has included four stage wins, 20 days in the yellow jersey and being crowned King of the Mountains, Europcar's Thomas Voeckler is riding his 13th Tour de France in 2015.



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SADDLE

Quintana's Fizik Antares R1 saddle features signature scuffing from a fall



FRAME

The latest Ultimate CF SLX frameset is lighter than the more aerodynamic Aeroad — perfect for a climbing specialist such as Quintana

Nairo Quintana's Canyon Ultimate CF SLX

A bike fit for a climbing king

Several new bikes were launched ahead of this year's Tour de France including this, the 2016 version of the Canyon Ultimate CF SLX as ridden by Colombian climbing star, Nairo Quintana.

The Ultimate CF SLX features a very light frame, with a claimed weight of 780g for a size 56/large. However, the diminutive 167cm tall Quintana rides an XS frame from the German brand, and has no problem meeting

the UCI's minimum weight limit of 6.8kg, even when using a proprietary 110mm aluminium stem with a -17° angle and aluminium bars.

Rather than opt for the more aerodynamic Canyon Aeroad CF SLX, favoured by Quintana's Movistar teammate Alejandro Valverde

or double Tour stage winner Joaquim Rodríguez, Quintana prefers the superior comfort offered by the Ultimate. A big contribution to the increased comfort comes from the cleverly designed seatpost clamp which is 10cm lower down the tube and features a



POWER METER

Quintana's custom-made Power 2 Max power meter is paired with a Campagnolo Super Record EPS groupset using a 53/39t chainset and 11-28t cassette

synthetic polymer insert.

Quintana favours the same Fizik Antares saddle as his chief rival Chris Froome. The saddle suits riders who sit slightly upright and tend not to rotate their pelvis when riding as much as the likes of Bradley Wiggins and Geraint Thomas.

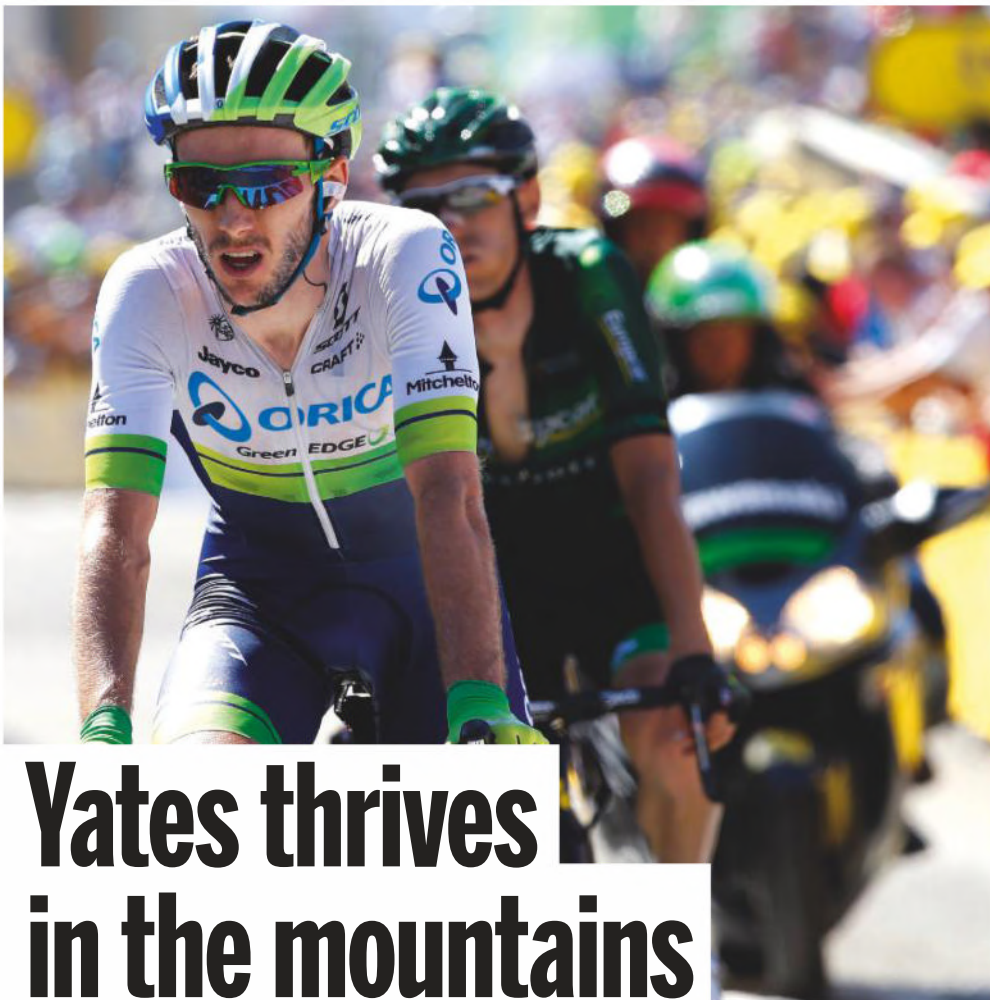
The wheels are Campagnolo Bora Ultra tubulars, with Continental Competition Pro Ltd 25mm tyres. The Bora Ultra wheels are slightly antiquated compared to many other deep section wheels being used by other teams, owing to their 'V' cross section, with more modern

designs turning to a 'U' shape for better cross wind stability.

Interestingly, Quintana hasn't opted for Canyon's new integrated aero cockpit and stem, which is reportedly 5.5 watts more efficient at 45kph. When asked why he was not using the new bar Quintana said, "I don't want to change

too much before the Tour, but I will plan to use it next year."

He continued: "The bar isn't currently available in a shape I normally use. When you are on the flat surrounded by other riders, it doesn't make much difference, aerodynamics are less important."



Yates thrives in the mountains

Orica's Adam Yates relishing opportunities on Tour debut

Britain's Adam Yates further added to his burgeoning reputation with his impressive displays during the second week of the Tour.

The 22-year-old, Bury-born rider placed seventh in the race's first summit finish to La-Pierre-Saint-Martin, two minutes behind stage winner Chris Froome.

"I was in a good position because we took it easy in the team time trial [on stage nine], so I am probably a little bit fresher than some of the big GC guys," said Yates.

"I've shown in the past that I can climb with some of the best guys in world when I'm on a good day, it's just that the Tour de France is another step up. We'll try again another day."

Without any pressure to target the general classification, the Orica-GreenEdge rider, who is participating in his first Tour, was also active in last Sunday's breakaway.

"The beauty of Adam, like his brother Simon, is that he is versatile," said Orica DS Matt White. "He got in the breakaway on a different type of stage compared to the mountains, and that could have stayed away on another day."

Despite suffering from a head cold, twin brother Simon — who rode two weeks of last year's Tour — placed 10th in Mende having been a part of that day's breakaway, his second top-10 of the race.

"He got ill when we transferred down to Pau on the first rest day, so that's not ideal," added White. "For the five days after that he has suffered, he's not 100 per cent still, but it's getting better."

"But they're racers, they love getting stuck in and having a go. I think for their future development, this has been the best way for them to experience the Tour de France."

"We're going into uncharted territory, as they've never experienced the third week of the Tour de France before."

"But I think a lot of the bunch is going to be on their knees in the Alps, so it'll be interesting to see how they go."

Dowsett's tough debut ends in abandon

Alex Dowsett's debut Tour de France ended last Thursday, as stomach problems on top of the after-effects of a week-one crash got the better of him. Dowsett was last-but-one on GC prior to his abandon. "With the injuries I've had, had it have been any other race, I would have gone home a long time ago," he told *Cycling Weekly*.



Rider disqualified for hitching a ride

Argentinean Eduardo Sepulveda was disqualified from the race during Saturday's 14th stage after covering part of the course in a car. The Bretagne-Séché Environnement rider snapped his chain on the Côte de la Croix Neuve before his team car initially drove past him. Ag2r-La Mondiale stopped to assist but were unable to service him, so he got in the vehicle for 100 metres to where his DS had parked up to come to his aid. Sepulveda claimed he couldn't walk up the steep hill in his cleats.

Team buses miss stage finish

Cycling went back in time last Sunday, as a long transfer comprising narrow roads for 150 kilometres between the start and finish, resulted in only five team buses making it to the stage finish in Valence on time. Orica-GreenEdge DS Matt White described it as "like going back to my riding days" and while Team Sky's bus was one of those that didn't make it, one of the controversial motorhomes they have on the race handily did.

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To do this week...

Ride

AJ Cycles Sportive, July 26

The first ever sportive organised by the Higham Ferrers-based shop has three challenging routes of 25, 40 and 80 miles, with over 3,000 feet of climbing awaiting those taking on the longest of the three. The route takes in some of the prettiest parts of rural Northamptonshire, and according to the organisers, "there's something for everyone".

Entry costs £20/25. www.ajcycles.co.uk/sportive

Summer crits at Winchester



Race

VC Venta Summer Criterium, South Winchester Park & Ride, July 26

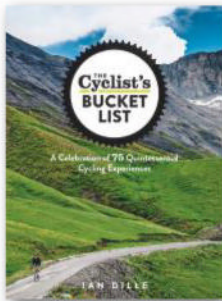
The third of four crits run by local club VC Venta this summer, the circuit is described by the organisers as a "hot-dog criterium with a technical bottom corner and repeated gradients that the locals are still mastering". With races for elites down to fourth-cats and a number of youth races, everyone is catered for.

Entry costs £14 (£18 on the day). tinyurl.com/qghhc36

Read

The Cyclist's Bucket List by Ian Dille

From roads made iconic by pro cycling like Alpe d'Huez and the cobbles of Paris-Roubaix, to Vietnamese highways and a Tour of Africa, author Ian Dille showcases 75 of the world's quintessential cycling experiences. RRP £16.99. www.rodaleinc.com



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Weekly column

Rob Hayles



"The battle for the bottleneck to join the descending convoy is as hard-fought as any lead-out for that bend 300m from the line"

We are now well into this year's Tour de France, and the general classification is shaping up nicely. For some, there have been a few scary moments on the way, but in general most of us are in the fight for the big finish in Paris.

"Us?" I hear you cry!

Yes, 'us', because, in the Tour, there are always races within the race, the top guys battling for the yellow, and further back those fighting among themselves to stay top 10 or win stages. There is another race within a race; for us in the commentary scrum, there is always a huge personal battle to stay one step ahead of the opposition.

The mountaintop evacuations after a stage are always a tense and nervous time. The place where you park is crucial for that quick exit, and the battle for the bottleneck to join the descending convoy is as hard-fought as any lead-out for that final bend 300m from the line. The leader of broadcast media's maillot jaune is, as usual, 'King' Sean Kelly. His driving skills are on a par with the abilities on the bike that made him world number-one on so many occasions.

Fines and punishment

As with the riders, we drivers of the Tour route can have fines and time penalties dished out to us. So far, we have picked up only the one for a slight bending of the rules. After stage 10, while fighting for position going into an autoroute toll lane, we picked the shorter, quicker queue, only to realise, too late, that it was for the automated telepass drivers.

I had to think quick, and as the car in front passed through, I tailgated him. As the barrier came back down, it clipped the roof. But we were through, making up a good 10 places. Exiting at our slip-road half an hour later was a little less simple. Trying to explain how we had got through the tollbooths sans ticket was never going to work. So, having had a stern talking-to and the €45 fine paid, we were on our way. With Paris in sight, Sean Kelly had better keep an eye on his rear-view mirror. We're closing in!

Former double world track champion, Rob Hayles is a pundit for TV and radio. He's also a coffee connoisseur and garden shed inventor

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Bibby takes it on the line

Last-minute catch at Ryedale GP

Daniel Ostanek

NFTO's Ian Bibby cut it fine to take his second victory of the British Cycling Elite Road Series at Sunday's Ryedale Grand Prix in North Yorkshire. After a thrilling race which saw near-constant attacks, the man from Preston caught and passed JLT-Condor's Tom Moses within sight of the line.

Bibby was one of the few strong enough to make the decisive move of the race, a 10-man group which went clear with around 16km to race. Despite launching an unsuccessful earlier solo move, the NFTO man still had enough strength to attack again with 1km to race and catch Moses, who had broken free with 3km to go.

In the shadow of Ampleforth Abbey, Bibby caught the fading Moses on the uphill run to the finish to take his third win of the season.

"The race is always a pretty hard one but the last half was really tough with lots of groups going," Bibby said. "The last 3km was constant attacking. Then I had to go

from 1K out and just got him in time.

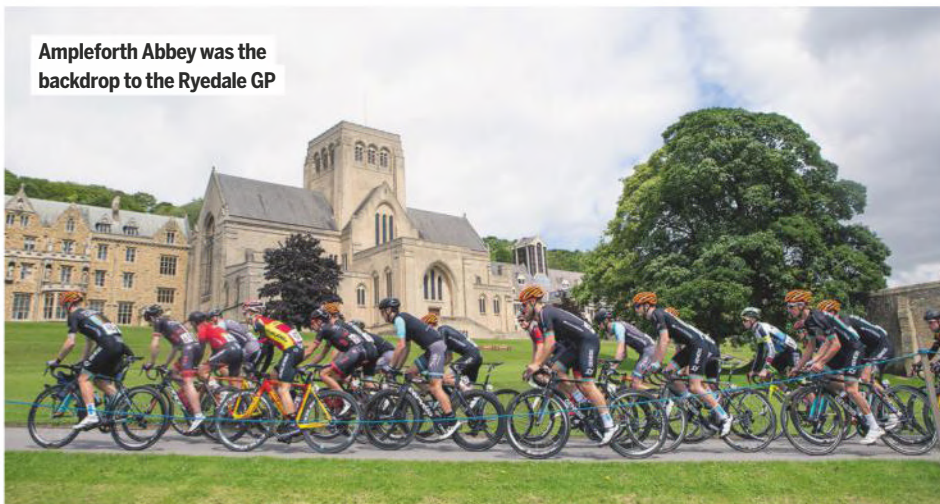
"It was every man for himself, but we had people in every move," added Bibby, who has also won the Chorley GP and a stage of the An Post Rás this season. "I was just trying to go hard up the hill, and things just panned out well."

Strong winds on the day only added to the attrition on the hilly course, which hosted the National Championships in 2012. With JLT-Condor in control early on, the attacks came thick and fast into the second half of the race.

Pete Williams of One Pro Cycling rounded out the podium, while a fourth place for Raleigh-GAC's Steve Lampier saw him secure the Elite Road Series title. With two rounds remaining, his 64-point lead is now insurmountable.

Nikki Juniper of Giordana-Triton took the win in a rain-affected women's race earlier in the day. She had already secured the Women's Road Series, having won the previous round in Stafford two weeks earlier.

Ampleforth Abbey was the backdrop to the Ryedale GP



Draper is Junior champ

After finishing second last year, Nathan Draper of RST Racing went one better this time around and took the Junior National Road Race Championships in North Yorkshire on Saturday. The highly rated Manxman edged out Robert Scott (VCUK PH MAS) and Alfie Moses (HMT

Academy) to win a three-man sprint on the line after the trio had attacked on the final lap of the wind-hit race. It was the second victory in as many weeks for Draper, having won the latest round of the National Junior Series in Hatherleigh, Devon.



Obituary: Don Lock

Tributes have been paid to one of Worthing Excelsior CC's 'greatest sons', Don Lock, who died after a suspected road rage confrontation in West Sussex on July 16.

Lock, 79, died from stab wounds after getting out of his car following a minor collision with another vehicle on the A24 near Worthing, a crime which made national news. A 34-year-old man, Matthew Daley, has been charged with his murder.

"His death will be an irreplaceable loss to the club," said a statement from Worthing Excelsior, according to the *Worthing Herald*. "Don was an enthusiastic member of the club and although he no longer raced he would always support the club in his many ventures and would offer support, guidance and encouragement to all."

"He was an example to all members of the cycling club but also the wider community in his exceptional sense of humour and positive attitude."

"His distinctive laugh was always heard above the hubbub of club events and race HQs."



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Dozen-medal haul for GB at Track Euros

Young Brits show promise at Junior Champs

Daniel Ostanek

Great Britain's future on the track continues to look promising after a haul of 12 medals, including four golds, at the European U23 and Junior Track Championships in Athens, Greece last week.

The gold rush started with the U23 men's team pursuit on Tuesday as Oliver Wood, Matt Gibson, Germain Burton and Chris Latham beat the Swiss team by almost three seconds.

Seventeen-year-old Yorkshireman Joey Walker took Britain's second gold the next day, edging out Poland's Szymon Krawczyk by two points in the junior men's points race.

Friday saw Matt Gibson add another medal to his tally with gold in the

U23 men's scratch race, while Katy Marchant's triumph in the U23 women's keirin on Sunday made sure that Britain doubled their 2014 gold tally.

The team, which took home 10 medals at the 2014 championships, also won five silvers and three bronzes. Russia topped the medal table, with 25 in total, including nine golds.



Lifelong cycling journalist Peter Bryan dies

The veteran cycling journalist Peter Bryan has died aged 89, just a few months shy of his 90th birthday. Bryan began his career as a teenager freelancing for the weekly magazine *The Bicycle* before becoming editor. Convinced that Britain should copy the Continent and allow massed-start racing on the roads, and a public supporter of the British League of Racing Cyclists, he was suspended by the Road Time Trials Council (the RTTC). He never found out if the ban was ever lifted.

Bryan also helped Jock Wadley found *Coureur/The Sporting Cyclist* and later became managing editor of *Cycling* (now *Cycling Weekly*). Alongside editor Alan Gayfer, Bryan pushed for a monument on Mont Ventoux to Tom Simpson, who died there in 1967.

For more than 50 years Bryan wrote about the sport with clarity and enthusiasm, covering the cycling events at every Olympic Games from London in 1948 to Sydney in 2000. He was cycling correspondent for *The Daily Mail* and later *The Times*.

Photo: Cor Vos

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THE BIG QUESTION

Why do you think there are so many crashes at the Tour de France?

It's probably due to the massively high stakes. The Tour is vitally important for every team, and the need for results, whether stage, green or yellow, means that riders are probably taking greater risks in order to get to the front.

Simon Daw

Too many hours spent on trainers and not on the road. You only get handling skills by riding the bike.

Charlie Ryan

Sectional peloton overcrowding resulted in crashes from bike-on-bike contact or limited forward views of deviations or obstructions in their path of travel. Wet roads also contributed due to traction loss.

Ron Antonelli

All the good-looking fans on the sidelines make for quite a distraction I guess!

Benjamin Goddard

The mountain stages are too deep into the Tour, resulting in the entire peloton thinking it still has a good shot at the general classification in the first week. This means everyone wants to be in the front row all the time.

Richard de Hoop

Race radios — 200 riders simultaneously being told to get to the front by their directeur sportifs as there's a roundabout/narrow road/bad corner coming up.

Artie Fufkin

It actually seems like there have been fewer crashes this year, in my opinion.

Justin Hanneken

It's a matter of perspective. It feels like there have been a lot of crashes, but what should we expect when hundreds of



riders cycle thousands of miles together? Do the maths and I reckon there are fewer crashes than the average, say, one-day Classic.

Josh King

Invisible aardvarks! Hundreds of them, all over the place, pooing everywhere!

Paul Cole

It's because the riders haven't sat their Cycling Proficiency test. Reckon I could smoke them with my excellent indicating skills and hi-vis torso strap from Halfords.

Roy Milne

Because the directeur sportif says "get to the front" to everyone and they can't all be at the front. Why do they need to be on the front? To stay clear of the crashes? Hmm.

Huw Salway

Too many riders. Cut the number of riders per team and cut the amount of wild

cards. It won't stop crashes — we will always have crashes — but I do think it will help in having fewer of them.

William Dunne

Nearly 200 people all trying to fit in the same spot on the road. Blistering heat makes you more tired, easier to lose focus, human error, mechanicals, dropped bottles, instability in turns, rain and human error again.

Chris Witek

Pro cycling is a high-speed sport with huge bunches of riders travelling inches apart... accidents will always happen.

John Bryson

Next week's big question...

Apart from your bike, what is your favourite item of cycling kit?

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Letters

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Unequal treatment

STAR
LETTER

Why are Chris Froome and Sky singled out when it comes to drug questions?

First it was Bradley Wiggins and then Froome in 2013. Now, just because Froome and his supporting team get a good start in this year's Tour they're asked questions once again.

Last year Vincenzo Nibali ran away with the Tour as he did the previous year at the Giro. All this with a team that should have had their licence taken away with their doping record. Where were the questions?

Ditto Alberto Contador's performance in last year's Vuelta (after breaking a leg at the Tour) and again at the Giro this year. Then there's his pathetic excuse of eating contaminated beef to explain away a drugs positive.

Again, where were the questions?

Froome has worked hard over the winter and now he's reaping the rewards.

Chris Boardman is right: until we have 10 years of clean riding the questions will always keep coming thanks to Lance Armstrong. The way to stop doping? A zero tolerance approach: if you're a promising 20-year-old or a seasoned pro and you take drugs and get caught you should be banned for life, end of story. If you want to stay in, stay clean!

Don Palmer, email

Sniffy Sky

I was interested to read in the *Daily Telegraph* that Chris Froome had, pre-Tour, not shaken hands

with the gentlemen of the press because he might catch something off them. Imagine my surprise when, on the Tour podium, he shook hands with the VIPs. Does this mean that the average journo is more unclean than everyone else? Or has Sir Dave decided his riders can fraternise with dignitaries who may be loaded enough to sponsor his team? I can't wait to get up close and personal with Team Sky — having of course sprayed myself with antiseptic!

Adrian Durnell, email

Lost levers

Just read in *CW* that Cav's new bike has 'hidden brakes'. I'll clearly never be a pro. I need to know exactly where my brakes are.

Graham Moss, email

A welcome return

Having been away from cycling for nine years, I've returned with new vigour this season. Racing in this country for the over-40s is as strong and keen as ever, with the hard-working LVRC organisers keeping racing for veterans going in the UK.

Also, people like Mick Ives and his team at M.I. Racing have been doing great things for this age group by promoting and running excellent races. I see nothing's changed over at British Cycling with regards to the diversity of over-40s events, so it's thanks to the likes of LVRC, and Mick and his team, that I've still got events to enter after all these years!

Rob O'Connor, email

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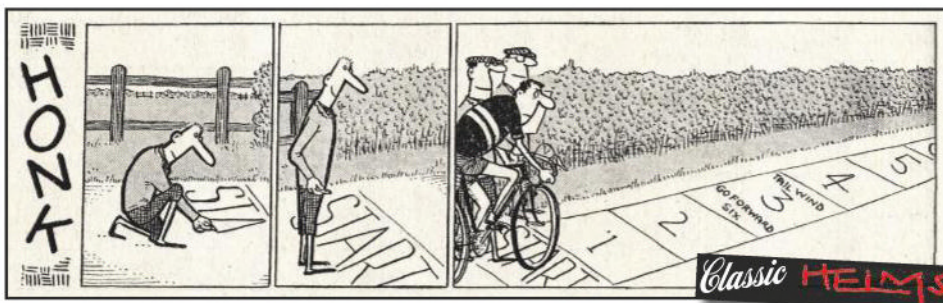
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Johnny Helms was *Cycling Weekly's* resident cartoonist from February 1946 until November 2009.

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Blazing saddles

When searing temperatures add an extra element of suffering

Traditionally, the stages that take the race from one mountain range to another offer riders respite.

In the 2015 Tour, however, that hasn't exactly been the case, with a total of 12 categorised climbs across the four transitional stages that followed the Tour's three-day stint in the Pyrenees last week.

"A lot of the time you think there might be an easier day coming up, based on what you see in the road book," said Ireland's Sam Bennett (Bora-Argon 18), who was the lanterne rouge going into Tuesday's rest day. "But there's not been a stage like that yet. It's been like the World Championships every day."

"I thought Friday [stage 13] was going to be a much nicer stage, but it was so hard. I went too far into the red on one of the climbs to hang onto the group, and it wasn't

Yates in bidon bung ban

Tinkoff-Saxo DS Sean Yates was thrown off the Tour for Monday's stage after a mechanic threw a bottle at a television motorcycle driver. Faustino Muñoz, who was travelling in the vehicle driven by the Briton, tossed the bidon in frustration after deeming that the bike had interfered with a bike change for Peter Sagan.

The lion runs with the rhinos

Chris Froome rode a liveried Pinarello Dogma F8 bike on stage 13 to raise awareness of the plight of rhinos across the world. Decals of rhinos featured on either side of the head tube, as well as the top and down tubes, and coincided with Froome

Froome's upped his big game...



becoming an ambassador for the Unite for Wildlife charity

IAM's Friday night on the town

downhill afterwards, so I really paid for that."

Stage 13 followed one of the toughest mountain stages of the race to Plateau de Beille. On paper, that should have been a more gentle day in the saddle.

"The way it was raced, and the heat, I'd say it was as tough," said Orica-GreenEdge's Luke Durbridge.

Temperatures on the road neared 40°C, which only added to riders' ever-growing fatigue.

"It's something you can't describe, added Cannondale-Garmin's Nathan Hass. "The heat gets so deep within you that it feels like it's in your bones."

Katusha's soigneurs made up 200 bidons for their seven riders for that stage; even then sprinter Alexander Kristoff admitted he felt dehydrated at the finish.

French hotels don't always aid post-race recovery, either: "When you stay in places that don't have air conditioning, it's not easy to sleep," said Luke Rowe. "I saw riders sleeping on their balconies because it was that warm."

Riders like nothing more than having a hotel close to a stage finish and the following day's start, but after a hard day's racing, clear directions are a must. Last Friday night, IAM were based in Rodez, the end point of that day's stage and departure point of Saturday's, so the riders were told to ride back to their hotel. Despite it being only a kilometre away from the finish, four of the Swiss team's riders got lost for 30 minutes.

Astana suffer feline fatality

Astana's dreadful Tour went from bad to worse on Friday, when a stowaway cat that was stuck in the engine of one of its team cars died. The local fire brigade were called, but were unable to save the animal's life.

Our Tour experts

Malcolm Elliott

The former bunch galooper is driving VIPs on the Tour
Tours ridden: 2

"I spoke with Steve Cummings before stage 14 because one of the guests in my car that day was from Birkenhead, near where he hails from. I had a chat with him and he told me how he'd been trying to make it into the breakaway on a few other stages. Then he went and got in the break and won the stage.

"It was so satisfying for me and my guests to see him win because they had pictures taken with him at the start and talked to him before he became a winner. I was at the finish line watching the race on television, surrounded by French fans who were shouting for Romain Bardet and Thibaut Pinot.

Cédric Vasseur

Our resident Frenchman reports from a motorbike for TV
Tours ridden: 10

"I'm commentating on the race live from a motorbike. The day of the first mountain stage, I was following Nibali who was totally stuffed, then Contador, who was also stuffed, then I was on Nairo Quintana's wheel just at the time Chris Froome was attacking. I had the feeling that all the riders were really suffering. I said: "It's just unbelievable, I don't understand how Chris Froome can pedal so fast in such a hard climb."

"That's it. It was my impression and I gave it, that's my job.

"That evening, a journalist asked me what I thought. I said, 'I have nothing else to say, except that I regret there was no bike check

Charly Wegelius

The Yorkshireman is a sports director with Cannondale-Garmin
Tours ridden: 3

"As a team we could have been in the midst of a really great Tour with a stage win and maybe a nice GC in the bag already but the reality is we're still fighting to get a result.

"The morale is good, the desire to keep on looking for a result is there but you can't help but look back.

"Andrew Talansky's puncture on Saturday summed it up — we did the right things, we were in the right places and it just didn't quite work out in this case due to misfortune.

"The deeper into the race you go and the more tired the riders become, they need to get

"The fans were shouting "Allez Romain!" and "Oh Pinot!" as they came up the final climb. The cameras seemed to focus on the two Frenchmen out front and I got a bit immersed in that until we saw Steve come storming into the shot.

"Steve and I raced together at the Girvan Three Day back in 2004 and I remember he was out in the breakaway with me, John Tanner and Mark Lovatt. It's always an amazing thing when you can remember being in the same peloton as one of these guys and see that they've developed into a Tour stage winner!"



because now everyone is thinking that extra power can come from the bike itself. I said clearly that it's not the fault of Froome, or anyone else, but the fault of the UCI.

"I'm not paid by Sky and nor is Laurent Jalabert. We are paid by France Television to give our opinion and we are careful not to put doubts on riders. It's not our fault if some people are doing crazy things along the route.

"In France, you have to understand, we don't really like the winner who is too strong. We always prefer the Raymond Poulidor-like figure, the second place rider."



a little bit of perspective on possibilities that there are for results and their own capabilities.

"They need a little bit of help to push themselves into making that extra effort, when the rational part of your brain would tell you to preserve what you have and try and rest and concentrate on getting to Paris.

"The fatigue can cloud their view at times so that's the challenge at this stage of the race.

"I try to take it a little bit on a case-by-case basis, based on the riders involved and trying to feel the atmosphere on the bus."



Stage 10

Tarbes > La Pierre-Saint-Martin 167km

Tuesday July 14

Chris Froome lays down his marker

Team Sky leader seizes first summit finish

Richard Abraham

Chris Froome stamped his authority on the race on the first day in the mountains. Attacking with 6.7km to the summit at La Pierre-Saint-Martin in the Pyrenees, he took a solo victory in the yellow jersey and put time into all his key rivals. Richie Porte and Geraint Thomas finished second and sixth to cap a perfect day for Team Sky.

What was the damage?

Only Porte, Nairo Quintana (Movistar) and Robert Gesink (LottoNL-Jumbo) kept within two minutes of Froome after his textbook high cadence attack. Tejay van Garderen (BMC) limited his losses but Alberto Contador (Tinkoff-Saxo) and Vincenzo Nibali (Astana) haemorrhaged time.

Sky didn't hang about, did they?

Movistar rode hard at the foot of the climb. However Froome smelled blood and got his team-mates to set an asphyxiating tempo. "The guys lifted the pace and set it up for me so I could attack

still while the gradient was quite steep," he explained.

Any surprises?

Adam Yates finished seventh and put three Brits in the top 10 on the stage. "I was distanced when Contador was dropped and I just rode at my own pace and I worked my way back up," he said.

Vive la France?

It was a bad day for the home nation; Romain Bardet (+8.50) struggled in the heat and Thibaut Pinot lost 10 minutes. Even combativity honours for the breakaway of Pierrick Fédrigo and Kenneth Vanbilsen went to the Belgian.

STAGE INFO

WEATHER Hot

TERRAIN High mountains



Chris Froome powers up Col de Soudet to victory

BREAKING THE BASTILLE DAY DROUGHT

The last bastions

Sophie Hurcom

For a French rider at the Tour, winning a stage or wearing yellow on Bastille Day is almost guaranteed to turn you into a national hero. A pilgrimage to watch the Tour is a tradition of the July 14 festivities, so getting on the podium will catapult a home rider both into the hearts of fans and the history books. However a Frenchman hasn't won on Bastille Day since 2005, when David Moncoutié took the stage honours in the Alps.

As such, the riders play down the significance of the day.

Thomas Voeckler, who claimed the yellow jersey on Bastille Day in 2011, referred to it as: "Just a stage like the others, and I think about it like that."

Similarly, Tony Gallopin, who wore yellow on Bastille Day in 2014 and finished in the top 10 on the stage this year, becoming the highest placed French rider overall in the process, said: "It's a special day for us but if we can win on the July 14 or July 20, we just want to win the stage."



Fédrigo's Bastille battle proved in vain

But that doesn't mean when it comes to the day, French riders won't do everything they can to break the decade-long drought. Turn on the television on Bastille Day and a French rider in the breakaway is almost a given.

Take Pierrick Fédrigo of

Bretagne-Séché Environnement. He attacked with just 7.5km of the race gone, with Cofidis's Kenneth Vanbilsen chasing after him. The duo rode together alone for the flat main part of the stage before Fédrigo dropped Vanbilsen, and was eventually caught on the uphill finale with 8km to go.

So while he said after the stage that it was "a day just like any other", he then could not hide his dismay that it was his breakaway companion, not him who was awarded the day's combativity prize. "I have nothing against Vanbilsen or Belgians," he said, "but it's just a lack of respect for me and for the whole public on the side of the road."

ON THE PODIUM



Chris Froome
Team Sky



André Greipel
Lotto-Soudal



Chris Froome
Team Sky



Nairo Quintana
Movistar

RESULTS

1. Chris Froome (GBr) Team Sky in 4:22.07

2. Richie Porte (Aus) Team Sky at 0.59
3. Nairo Quintana (Spa) Movistar at 1.04
4. Robert Gesink (Ned) LottoNL-Jumbo at 1.33
5. Alejandro Valverde (Esp) Movistar at 2.01
6. Geraint Thomas (GBr) Team Sky at 2.01
7. Adam Yates (GBr) Orica-GreenEdge at 2.04
8. Pierre Rolland (Fra) Europcar at 2.04
9. Tony Gallopin (Fra) Lotto-Soudal at 2.22
10. Tejay van Garderen (USA) BMC Racing at 2.30

Other 11. Alberto Contador (Esp) Tinkoff-Saxo at 2.51; 17. Bauke Mollema (Ned) Trek Factory Racing at 4.09; 21. Vincenzo Nibali (Ita) Astana at 4.25; 28. Rigoberto Urán (Col) Etixx-Quick Step at 5.54.

Overall classification after stage 10

1. Chris Froome (GBr) Team Sky in 35:56.09

2. Tejay van Garderen (USA) BMC Racing at 2.52
3. Nairo Quintana (Col) Movistar at 3.09
4. Alejandro Valverde (Esp) Movistar at 4.01
5. Geraint Thomas (GBr) Team Sky at 4.03
6. Alberto Contador (Esp) Tinkoff-Saxo at 4.04
7. Tony Gallopin (Fra) Lotto-Soudal at 4.33
8. Robert Gesink (Ned) LottoNL-Jumbo at 4.35
9. Warren Barguil (Fra) Giant-Alpecin at 6.12
10. Vincenzo Nibali (Ita) Astana at 6.57

Other 12. Rigoberto Urán (Col) Etixx-QuickStep at 7.22; 29. Adam Yates (GBr) Orica-GreenEdge at 19.59.

Stage 10 In pictures





Photos: Chris Catchpole, Yuzuru Sunada, Cor Vos, Bryn Lennon/Getty Images

Left: Chris Froome storms into La Pierre-Saint-Martin after pulling off a devastating mountain attack that put him almost three minutes clear of his nearest GC rival, Tejay van Garderen



Clockwise from top: A cooling shower comes courtesy of the airport fire brigade; fans watch the peloton stream over a bridge while paddleboarders watch from the water below; Froome's rapturous victory salute; Reinardt Janse van Rensburg of Team MTN-Qhubeka gets a pre-stage shave



Stage 11

Pau > Cauterets 188km

Wednesday July 15

Majka's majestic mountain move

Polish champ tears up the Tourmalet

Nick Bull

Rafał Majka emerged as the saviour of Tinkoff-Saxo's Tour for the second year running, as he filled an Alberto Contador-shaped hole to solo to victory in Cauterets on a second hot day in the Pyrenees.

How long was he solo for?

The Pole attacked from a seven-man breakaway on the Col du Tourmalet, just under 50 kilometres from the finish.

Once he'd established his gap on the famed climb, he looked pretty much unbeatable.

Was there much of a fight for second?

Yes, courtesy of Ireland's Dan Martin. The Cannondale-Garmin rider rode like a man possessed in chase of first the day's breakaway and later Majka; it was almost as if he thought he was the leader on the road and was on course to take victory. It was a rather bizarre performance given he never looked like closing in on the leader.

Any other action?

German road race champion

and neo-pro Emanuel Buchmann (Bora-Argon 18) finished third. Home favourite Thomas Voeckler placed fifth after making it into the day's main break.

And what of the GC battle?

Trek's Bauke Mollema launched an attack on the final climb, but the half-hearted response behind said a lot. He gained just 10 seconds on Chris Froome. Defending champion Vincenzo Nibali was the big loser again, finishing 50 seconds behind the yellow jersey group, after Astana had worked hard to split the peloton.

STAGE INFO

WEATHER Sunny, dry

TERRAIN High mountains



Majka solos to a dizzying victory

SUFFERING ON THE TOURMALET

Dempster's demons

Richard Abraham

The Tourmalet. Legendary, but not exactly likeable. It was the first high mountain pass in the Tour's history and is today the most climbed, with 83 ascents and counting. The first time the race crested this 2,115m gap in the Pyrenees in 1910, rider Octave Lapize shouted to organisers: "you are assassins!"

Combined, the French words 'Tour' and 'Mal' mean 'bad trip.' For one rider in 2015, the Tourmalet was definitely no walk

in the park. Zak Dempster rode the climb so far behind the front of the race that fans had already thought the Tour had passed and started walking down the climb. By the time he reached the finish in Cauterets, over 45 minutes behind the stage winner, he was ready to burst into tears live on television.

"It was a lonely climb. I was on my limit but I was slow," Dempster told *Cycling Weekly*.

"I had Rui Costa and Rein Taaramae with me at the start and we had a couple of Ag2r



riders, and they got off ahead of us and we saw them on the side of the road.

"And then, Costa and Taaramae talked to me and said, 'you've got to stop.' They both stopped and that was a pretty hard moment for

me to figure out, thinking 'you're on your own now mate.'"

Dempster was suffering from severe saddle sores and wilting in the high temperatures. He finished 28 seconds outside the official time cut at the finish in Cauterets, however the volume of fans that he had to fight through meant that he was reinstated and started the following stage. Although he climbed off on stage 12, Dempster became another small addition into the annals of this mountain.

"I was thinking 'I am going to make my family and my friends proud of me'," Dempster added. "You've got to fight — and I'm not going to go quietly into the night."



RESULTS

1. Rafal Majka (Pol) Tinkoff-Saxo in 5:02.01

2. Dan Martin (Irl) Cannondale-Garmin at 1.00
3. Emanuel Buchmann (Ger) Bora-Argon 18 at 1.23
4. Serge Pauwels (Bel) MTN-Qhubeka at 2.08
5. Thomas Voeckler (Fra) Europcar at 3.34
6. Julien Simon (Fra) Cofidis at same time
7. Bauke Mollema (Ned) Trek Factory Racing at 5.11
8. Alejandro Valverde (Esp) Movistar at 5.19
9. Chris Froome (GBr) Team Sky at 5.21
10. Alberto Contador (Esp) Tinkoff-Saxo

Others 11. Nairo Quintana (Col) Movistar, 14. Geraint Thomas (GBr) Team Sky all at same time, 23. Vincenzo Nibali (Ita) Astana at 6.11, 52. Rigoberto Uran (Col) Etixx-Quick Step at 15.54

Overall classification after stage 11

1. Chris Froome (GBr) Team Sky in 41:03.31

2. Tejay van Garderen (USA) BMC Racing at 2.52
3. Nairo Quintana (Col) Movistar at 3.09
4. Alejandro Valverde (Esp) Movistar at 3.59
5. Geraint Thomas (GBr) Team Sky at 4.03
6. Alberto Contador (Esp) Tinkoff-Saxo at 4.04
7. Tony Gallopin (Fra) Lotto-Soudal at 4.33
8. Robert Gesink (Ned) LottoNL-Jumbo at 4.35
9. Warren Barguil (Fra) Giant-Alpecin at 6.44
10. Bauke Mollema (Ned) Trek Factory Racing at 7.05

Others 11. Vincenzo Nibali (Ita) Astana at 7.47, 17. Rigoberto Uran (Col) Etixx-Quick Step at 17.55

ON THE PODIUM



Chris Froome
Team Sky



Peter Sagan
Tinkoff-Saxo



Chris Froome
Team Sky



Nairo Quintana
Movistar

Stage 11 In pictures



Above: Pyrenean street furniture has a habit of moving... and mooing

Right: The Vallée de Saint-Savin provides a spectacular setting as the peloton pushes on





Left: The Pyrenees: stunning scenery that's easier on the eye than the thigh

Below left: Decked out in old-school apparel, this fan arrives to the party several decades late



Below right: The king of the mountains is sporting a majestic mustache



Bottom: Richie Porte and Geraint Thomas put in the hard yards for team and race leader Chris Froome



Stage 12

Lannemezan > Plateau de Beille 195km

Thursday July 16

Rodríguez storms to victory

Spaniard exhibits grit and tenacity in Pyrenean finale

Sophie Hurcom

On the final day in the Pyrenees, Joaquim Rodríguez (Katusha) took the stage honours in heavy rain while a number of skirmishes played out between the GC contenders.

Were they now able to compete with Chris Froome?

Not really, but Alberto Contador and Vincenzo Nibali at least got to play at being

the big challengers they were billed as.

What happened?

Contador was the first to attack, then, when he got reeled in, Nibali counter-attacked. Alejandro Valverde had a pop, before his teammate Quintana followed suit. All the while, Richie Porte then Geraint Thomas kept a steady tempo for Sky to stop the attackers going too far. Then it was the yellow jersey wearer who tried to accelerate away. The group finished together, but it was the action we'd been waiting to see.

How did Rodríguez win?

The Katusha rider survived what started the day as a 22-man breakaway to solo to the summit first. He set off up the final climb with Jakob Fuglsang and Romain Bardet, before leaving them behind.

Anyone else have a notable ride?

Michał Kwiatkowski was initially ahead of Rodríguez on the road, and climbed alone as the rain began pouring up to Plateau de Beille. But the Pole was soon overtaken, and all he got was a grandstand-seat view of the GC favourites attacking each other.

STAGE INFO

WEATHER

Hot and stormy

TERRAIN High mountains



The Katusha man weathers the storm

STORMS BATTER THE STAGE 12 PELOTON

Tour tempest

Nick Bull

Television commentators from across the world were silenced. Fans, surprisingly low in number towards the top of the mountain, disappeared from the roadside, while the normally booming music from the race's publicity caravan was barely audible.

The storm on Plateau de Beille, one of the fiercest to open its heavens on the Tour in recent years, had a significant effect atop the 1,780m-high climb, sporadically wiping out ITV4's live coverage and making stage

winner Joaquim Rodríguez look more like he'd been for a 50m swim. But was it all that bad?

"I'm not too sure the African guys on our team were too keen on the conditions," said MTN-Qhubeka's Steve Cummings of the rain and hail that came down for three-and-a-half hours solid.

"But it's still 15°C and it's only rain. Tirreno-Adriatico this year was worse."

It was in complete contrast to scenes at the stage start in Lannemezan, where some riders wore damp towels around their



necks en route to sign on, in an attempt to keep cool in 35°C heat. Come the finish, others were doing the same in an attempt to keep as warm as possible. Cannondale-Garmin directeur sportif Charly Wegelius and Andreas Klier even rode their riders' bikes down the climb to the team bus car park as the pros took refuge in team cars.

"It would have been a lot worse had we come into this storm and then had to descend off the mountain to the finish," said Giant-Alpecin's Koen de Kort. "I wouldn't have been up for that!"

Dutchman de Kort, along with Australian Michael Rogers, longed for a return of the warmer weather under which the first two



Pyrenean stages were played out ("My legs didn't know what to do," said the latter of climbing in the rain). Even so, after two weeks away from home, the conditions reminded one rider of what he was missing:

"I prefer the rain, to be honest," said Geraint Thomas. "It's like being back in Wales."

ON THE PODIUM



Chris Froome
Team Sky



Peter Sagan
Tinkoff-Saxo



Chris Froome
Team Sky



Nairo Quintana
Movistar

RESULTS

Tour de France, stage 12

1. Joaquim Rodríguez (Esp) Katusha 5:40.14

2. Jakob Fuglsang (Den) Astana at 1.12
3. Romain Bardet (Fra) Ag2r at 1.49
4. Gorka Izagirre (Esp) Movistar at 4.34
5. Louis Mentjes (RSA) MTN-Qhubeka at 4.38
6. Jan Barta (Cze) Bora-Argon 18 at 5.47
7. Romain Sicard (Fra) Europcar at 6.03
8. Mikael Cherel (Fra) Ag2r at 6.28
9. Alejandro Valverde (Esp) Movistar at 6.46
10. Chris Froome (GBr) Team Sky at 6.47
- Others** 11. Nairo Quintana (Col) Movistar at 6.47, 13. Tejay van Garderen (USA) BMC, 14. Alberto Contador (Esp) Tinkoff-Saxo, 16. Vincenzo Nibali (Ita) Astana, 17. Geraint Thomas (GBr) Team Sky all same time

Overall classification after stage 12

1. Chris Froome (GBr) Team Sky 46:50.32

2. Tejay van Garderen (USA) BMC Racing at 2.52
3. Nairo Quintana (Col) Movistar at 3.09
4. Alejandro Valverde (Esp) Movistar at 3.58
5. Geraint Thomas (GBr) Team Sky at 4.03
6. Alberto Contador (Esp) Tinkoff-Saxo at 4.04
7. Robert Gesink (Ned) LottoNL-Jumbo at 5.32
8. Tony Gallopin (Fra) Lotto-Soudal at 7.32
9. Vincenzo Nibali (Ita) Astana at 7.47
10. Bauke Mollema (Ned) Trek Factory Racing at 8.02

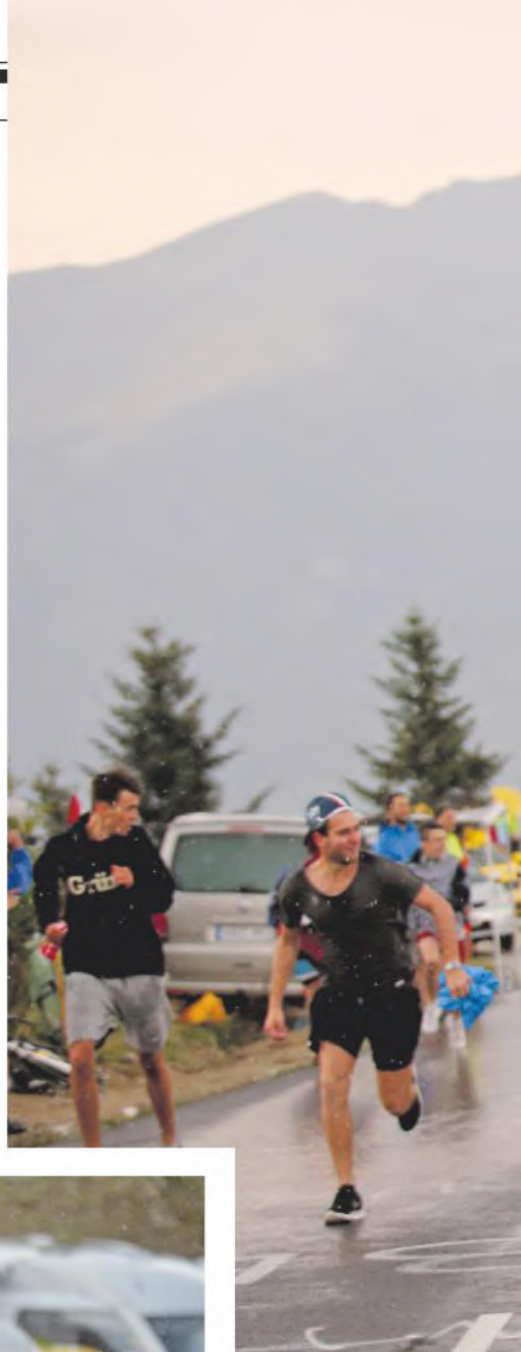
Stage 12 In pictures



Above: Michal Kwiatkowski and Sep Vanmarcke led for much of the day, with the world champion last to be caught at 7km to go

Below: Joaquim Rodríguez solos to the line in the pouring rain atop the mountain to win his second stage of the race so far

Right: Geraint Thomas was a stellar right-hand man for Chris Froome, as he faced attacks from all of his rivals up the final 15km climb





Left: Alberto Contador shows his descending skills as he leads the group downhill. The stage passed over four categorised climbs, ending on Plateau de Beille



Right: The Tour stops to pay its respects to Italian cyclist Fabio Casartelli, who died after a crash at the race 20 years ago in 1995. The race passed his memorial on the Col de Portet d'Aspet

Stage 13

Muret > Rodez 198.5km

Friday July 17

Van Avermaet is king of the hill

Break beaten on tough final climb in scorching heat

Stuart Clarke

BMC's expectant father Greg Van Avermaet won the Battle of the Bridesmaids against an equally-prominent nearly-man Peter Sagan, under the sun in Rodez.

How tough was the finish?

Very. Not only was the line at the top of a 570-metre long, 9.7 per cent average hill, it came after riders had raced for nearly 200 rolling

kilometres in temperatures of up to 39°C. Sagan looked spent from the ascent and couldn't find that extra gear needed to win.

Was it a foregone conclusion?

Not at all. Initially it looked as if breakaway survivors Thomas De Gendt, Wilco Kelderman and Cyril Gautier could make it to the finish clear. The trio were caught within the last kilometre.

Was it an easier day in the Pyrenees at last?

It was anything but, what with the heat, the relentlessly rolling terrain and winding

roads in the final 100 kilometres. Last year's runner-up Jean-Christophe Péraud crashed heavily and suffered nasty cuts to his arm and legs. Even so, after being tended to by the race doctors, he went on bidon duty for his team-mates.

What happened to the sprinters?

Giant-Alpecin worked on the front all day for John Degenkolb but he couldn't match the lead duo and finished fourth. Mark Cavendish fared comparatively well, losing only a minute compared to André Greipel's 12.

STAGE INFO

WEATHER Very hot, dry
TERRAIN Rolling hills



Loyal lieutenants escort yellow jersey Froome

FRENCH FANS GET BEHIND THEIR MEN

Let's hear it for the local hero

When the FDJ bus attracts the biggest crowd after a stage, it's a tell-tale sign that a rider is local to where the race finished. In Rodez, that applied to Alexandre Geniez, the 27-year-old, life-long resident of the town.

So loud were the cheers fans gave their favourite rider, that he said he could hear them while talking a cold shower on the bus.

"I enjoyed myself, with all these fans that I had in the final

kilometres. It's not every day that the Tour arrives at home," Geniez said.

Admittedly tired from the preceding mountain stages, Geniez achieved his main aim for the day: he made the breakaway, a six-man move that formed from the gun. "There was no fight from the peloton to get away," he added.

His presence was predictable: Friday's edition of local newspaper



Centre Presse ran with the headline: “Alexandre Geniez, une échappée pour rêver” [“a breakaway to dream of”], and he had described the stage, reportedly half-jokingly, as “my stage”.

Geniez could arguably have been more arrogant in his claim. Upon entering the Aveyron province in which Rodez sits, barely a kilometre of the route passed by without his name painted on the road. Some

fans displayed portrait prints of their local hero, while one well-groomed farming field even displayed the words “Vive Geniez”.

One can only imagine the euphoria had he had triumphed atop the challenging 570-metre finishing climb. But it wasn't to be: 14 kilometres from the finish, Geniez was dropped and ended up placing 85th.

However, he remained fan favourite the following day, as stage 14 set out from Rodez.



RESULTS

Tour de France 2015, stage 13:

1. Greg Van Avermaet (Bel) BMC Racing in 4:43.42

2. Peter Sagan (Svk) Tinkoff-Saxo at same time
3. Jan Bakelants (Bel) Ag2r La Mondiale at 0.03
4. John Degenkolb (Ger) Giant-Alpecin at 0.07
5. Paul Martens (Ger) LottoNL-Jumbo
6. Chris Froome (GBr) Team Sky
7. Vincenzo Nibali (Ita) Astana
8. Alberto Contador (Esp) Tinkoff-Saxo
9. Alejandro Valverde (Esp) Movistar
10. Tejay van Garderen (USA) BMC Racing all at same time

Others

12. Nairo Quintana (Col) Movistar at 0.07, 14. Geraint Thomas (GBr) Team Sky at same time, 32. Thibaut Pinot (Fra) FDJ at 0.42, 37. Mark Cavendish (GBr) Etixx-Quick Step at 0.58

Overall classification after stage 13

1. Chris Froome (GBr) Team Sky in 51:34.21
2. Tejay van Garderen (USA) BMC Racing at 2.52
3. Nairo Quintana (Col) Movistar at 3.09
4. Alejandro Valverde (Esp) Movistar at 3.58
5. Geraint Thomas (GBr) Team Sky at 4.03
6. Alberto Contador (Esp) Tinkoff-Saxo at 4.04
7. Robert Gesink (Ned) LottoNL-Jumbo at 5.32
8. Tony Gallopin (Fra) Lotto-Soudal at 7.32
9. Vincenzo Nibali (Ita) Astana at 7.47
10. Bauke Mollema (Ned) Trek Factory Racing at 8.02

ON THE PODIUM



Chris Froome
Team Sky



Peter Sagan
Tinkoff-Saxo



Chris Froome
Team Sky
(worn by Joaquim Rodríguez)



Nairo Quintana
Movistar

Stage 13 in pictures



Left: LottoNL-Jumbo's Robert Gesink takes a moment for reflection



Right: Cheeky smiles from Rodez





Above: Van Avermaet pips Peter Sagan to the post in a thrilling uphill sprint

Main: Propped up on the pavement, John Degenkolb cuts a picture of complete exhaustion

Right: French hope Jean-Christophe Péraud somehow mustered the courage to continue after a spectacular spill



Photos: Graham Watson, Yuzuru Sumada, Cor Vos, Doug Pensinger/Getty Images

Stage 14

Rodez > Mende 178.5km

Saturday July 18

The Brits are coming

Wirral man Steve Cummings takes a dramatic stage win for MTN-Qhubeka on Mandela Day

Nick Bull

On the day that French president François Hollande visited the Tour and it wound its way under the Millau viaduct and up the Tarn gorge, the home riders were shown up by the third *rosbif* to win a stage of this year's race: the Wirral's Steve Cummings.

Another historic day for the Brits, then?

Undoubtedly; a great day and a much-deserved win. The victory was Cummings's first Tour de France stage

win, but his victory was memorable for South Africa, too. The Brit's triumph came for his debutant South African team MTN-Qhubeka on the country's national holiday of Mandela Day.

How did he do it?

By cleverly mixing the ever-so-effective combination of good legs and perfect pacing. The 34-year-old was in a 20-strong breakaway that featured a duo from Ag2r La Mondiale and an FDJ trio. Ag2r's Romain Bardet broke clear towards the top of the challenging Côte de la Croix Neuve just outside of the finish, but was caught by last year's podium finisher Thibaut Pinot (FDJ) near the summit.

Where was Cummings in all this?

He rode the climb in a way that his long-time friend Bradley Wiggins would have done: at a steady tempo to avoid going into the red. Having bridged to the escape group at the top of the climb, he attacked them on the short downhill (and slightly twisty) run-in and held his gap on the finishing straight of the Mende airfield.

Any fireworks between the GC contenders?

Nairo Quintana attacked on the climb's 10 per cent sections and was shadowed into the finish by Chris Froome; he leapfrogged Tejay van Garderen into second place on GC.

STAGE INFO

WEATHER Very hot, dry
TERRAIN Undulating, tough final climb



Cummings closes on Bardet and Pinot

TRACKING THE TOUR

'Black sticks', explained

Unightly they may be, but nearly 200 80-gram 'black sticks' are slowly transforming the way we watch the Tour de France.

Heralded rather brilliantly by Tour race director Christian Prudhomme as being "top notch", the sticks are actually transmitters that enable global technological company Dimension Data to provide long-overdue, real-time information during each stage.

Television viewers will have seen graphics detailing riders' speeds and position on the road

included on nearly every stage broadcast, while a live tracking website emulates something similar that has been available to Formula 1 fans for years.

"We hope what we're doing will make cycling fans more knowledgeable about the sport," said the company's technical programme lead Peter Grey.

It's an impressive operation: the trackers use GPS, and the signals are transmitted back to vehicles and motorbikes in the race convoy. That information is relayed through helicopters to



**Inside Dimension
Data's HQ**

a cherry picker at the finish line, from where those employees on site set about how the data is presented.

In addition to seven staff on the race, employees in Paris, London and Melbourne work to ensure the data is accurate and up-to-date.

"This is a big challenge: riders can get spread over remote parts of France during the race," Grey added. "The requirement for it to be available in real time — in sync with the live TV feed — is the second biggest challenge."

Some teething problems remain (for instance, if a rider switches to a team-mates' bike mid-stage), but given the complexity of the operation and Dimension's three-month turnaround to implement the required systems in time for the race, their output thus far has been promising.

The company has been given a five-year contract with Tour organiser ASO.

ON THE PODIUM



**Chris Froome
Team Sky**



**Peter Sagan
Tinkoff-Saxo**



**Chris Froome
Team Sky**



**Nairo Quintana
Movistar**

RESULTS

1. Steve Cummings (GBr) MTN-Qhubeka in 4:23:43

2. Thibaut Pinot (Fra) FDJ at 0.02
3. Romain Bardet (Fra) Ag2r La Mondiale at 0.03
4. Rigoberto Uran (Col) Etixx-Quick Step at 0.20
5. Peter Sagan (Svk) Tinkoff-Saxo at 0.29
6. Cyril Gautier (Fra) Europcar at 0.32
7. Ruben Plaza (Esp) Movistar

8. Bob Jungels (Lux) Trek Factory Racing
9. Jonathan Castroviejo (Esp) Movistar all at same time
10. Simon Yates (GBr) Orica-GreenEdge at 0.33

Others 20. Chris Froome (GBr) Team Sky at 4.15, 21. Nairo Quintana (Col) Movistar at 0.01, 25. Tejay van Garderen (USA) BMC Racing at 5.06, 30. Geraint Thomas (GBr) Team Sky at same time.

Overall classification after stage 14

1. Chris Froome (GBr) Team Sky in 56:02:19

2. Nairo Quintana (Col) Movistar at 3.10
3. Tejay van Garderen (USA) BMC Racing at 3.32
4. Alejandro Valverde (Esp) Movistar at 4.02
5. Alberto Contador (Esp) Tinkoff-Saxo at 4.23
6. Geraint Thomas (GBr) Team Sky at 4.54
7. Robert Gesink (Ned) LottoNL-Jumbo at 6.23
8. Vincenzo Nibali (Ita) Astana at 8.17
9. Tony Gallopin (Fra) Lotto-Soudal at 8.23
10. Bauke Mollema (Ned) Trek Factory Racing at 8.53

Others 17. Thibaut Pinot (Fra) FDJ at 30.57, 28. Rigoberto Uran (Col) Etixx-Quick-Step at 46.26, 85. Steve Cummings (GBr) MTN-Qhubeka at 1:39.9.

Stage 14 In pictures



Above: Nairo Quintana moved up to second after today's stage but couldn't fend off Chris Froome, the Brit edging the Colombian by a second at the line

Right: Steve Cummings judged his effort to perfection and gave his African MTN-Qhubeka team another reason to celebrate Mandela Day





Above: High and mighty: the world's best cyclists ride in the shadow of the imposing Millau Bridge
Right: Simon Yates looked the most likely British winner but faded after Romain Bardet's acceleration split the breakaway
Left: Steve Cummings scored his second ever Grand Tour win — his first was in 2012 when he took stage 13 of the Vuelta



Photos: Cor Vos, Graham Watson, Yuzuru Sunada

Stage 15

Mende > Valence 183km

Sunday July 19

Greipel takes his third stage win

German on form on last day for sprinters before Paris

Sophie Smith

André Greipel (Lotto-Soudal) recovered from heatstroke to win his third stage of the Tour, beating John Degenkolb (Giant-Alpecin), Alexander Kristoff (Katusha) and Peter Sagan (Tinkoff-Saxo) in a four-way race to the line.

Where was Mark Cavendish?

Cavendish (Etixx-Quick Step) was part of the gruppetto that

formed on the grippy early climbs in the Massif Central, under the pace from Katusha. He said afterwards that he had had stomach problems the previous night, and that he felt “empty” at the start.

Wait, climbs on a sprint stage?

Despite four categorised climbs in the first half of the stage, the race hit the Rhône Valley with a fast, flat 55km approach to the line. The sprinters weren't going to let their last chance before Paris pass them by, and Katusha worked to ensure a nine-strong break, including Sagan once again, did not hold sway.

Was it a straightforward sprint finish?

Quick Step's Zdenek Stybar tried to throw a spanner in the works with a solo attack but he was curtailed by a puncture. Greipel's victory by half a wheel took his Tour win tally to its highest since 2012.

A day off for Chris Froome?

Froome successfully navigated what his closest overall rival Nairo Quintana (Movistar) observed as a busy start for the peloton, especially one that had been zapped by extreme weather in week two of the race. There was no change in the GC at the end of the day.

STAGE INFO

WEATHER Sunny, rainy, windy
TERRAIN Undulating



...and it's Greipel by a bike length

TOUR DOWNTIME

How do riders relax?

Whether they bury their heads in a book, catch up on a television series or interact with their fans on social media, every rider needs a way of escaping the high pressure environment of the Tour de France.

BMC's Tejay van Garderen didn't allow his GC bid to stop him finishing the only book he brought with him by stage 13, while Luke Rowe may have ruined Alex Dowsett's enjoyment of a *Game of Thrones* boxset by tweeting him a spoiler.

"A lot of the time I just sleep,"

admitted Simon Yates. "Last year someone brought a PlayStation with them, so we played a few games of FIFA, but at the Tour you don't really get much time to do anything. Me and my brother [Adam] get quite competitive when we play games, which takes a lot of mental energy away from the racing."

Cannondale-Garmin's Nathan Haas has visited the Tour's own barber shop before two stages, but his team-mates seem happy to remain on the bus. "It's all about music on our bus," he said.



"We've got a doctor who used to be a bit of a rapper; we call him Dr Beats [real name Lorenz Emmert]. He always puts a pretty good vibe on the bus at races."

Tour veteran Simon Geschke (Giant-Alpecin) enjoys the simple pleasures provided by the rider's village at the start of each stage to help him relax. "I usually go to the village before the stage to get a coffee or iced tea," he said. "It's super stressful during the stage and afterwards, so going to the village helps me to stay relaxed."

With the media circus that comes with the Tour de France,



The cut-throat world of pro cycling

many riders are in action and under scrutiny from the moment their team bus leaves the hotel in the morning, to the moment their head hits the pillow at night. And while relaxation time may come in the form of the dreaded ice bath for some riders, every little second out of the spotlight can count.

ON THE PODIUM



Chris Froome
Team Sky



Peter Sagan
Tinkoff-Saxo



Chris Froome
(Worn by Joaquim Rodriguez)
Team Sky



Nairo Quintana
Movistar

RESULTS

Tour de France 2015, stage 15:

1. André Greipel (Ger) Lotto-Soudal in 3:56.35

2. John Degenkolb (Ger) Giant-Alpecin
3. Alexander Kristoff (Nor) Katusha
4. Peter Sagan (Svk) Tinkoff-Saxo
5. Edvald Boasson Hagen (Nor) MTN-Qhubeka
6. Ramunas Navardauskas (Blr) Cannondale-Garmin
7. Christophe Laporte (Fra) Cofidis
8. Michael Matthews (Aus) Orica-GreenEdge
9. Davide Cimolai (Ita) Lampre-Merida
10. Florian Vachon (Fra) Bretagne Séché Environnement all at same time

Other 15. Bryan Coquard (Fra) Europcar, 23. Chris Froome (GBr) Team Sky all at same time, 135. Adam Yates (GBr) Orica-GreenEdge at 5.26, 151. Mark Cavendish (GBr) Etixx-Quick Step at 15.41

Overall classification after stage 15

1. Chris Froome (GBr) Team Sky, in 59:58.54
2. Nairo Quintana (Col) Movistar at 3.10
3. Tejay van Garderen (USA) BMC Racing at 3.32
4. Alejandro Valverde (Esp) Movistar at 4.02
5. Alberto Contador (Esp) Tinkoff-Saxo at 4.23
6. Geraint Thomas (GBr) Team Sky at 4.54
7. Robert Gesink (Ned) LottoNL-Jumbo at 6.23
8. Vincenzo Nibali (Ita) Astana at 8.17
9. Tony Gallopin (Fra) Lotto-Soudal at 8.23
10. Bauke Mollema (Ned) Trek Factory Racing at 8.53

Other 11. Warren Barguil (Fra) Giant-Alpecin at 11.03, 12. Romain Bardet (Fra) Ag2r La Mondiale at 13.10

Stage 15 In pictures





Left: The peloton transition from the Pyrenees towards the Alps, via four categorised climbs

Above: As the temperature continues to soar, Simon Geschke takes some much-needed water bottles

Below: With the race about to enter its final week, Chris Froome collects his 10th lion from the podium



Far left: As the last chance for the sprinters to win a stage before Paris, their teams weren't willing to let any kind of breakaway get too far up the road

Left: Peter Sagan may not have won a stage at the Tour since 2013, but the Slovakian rider isn't short on dedicated fans in France



Photos: Graham Watson, Yuzuru Sumada, Cor Vos

Stage 16

Bourg-de-Péage > Gap 201km
Monday July 20

Lampre win on tricky descent

Sagan second again as Thomas rides on after crash

Michael Hutchinson

The final transitional stage of the race, into the Alpine foothills at Gap, saw that rarest of events: a win for Lampre-Merida, courtesy of Spanish veteran Ruben Plaza.

How? And for that matter, who?

Plaza attacked from a small group on the last climb, the Col de Manse, and held off the chase of Peter Sagan (Tink-

off-Saxo) to win by 30 seconds. The 35-year-old finished 11th overall in the 2010 Tour.

And if Sagan was chasing him, that must mean...?

Oh, yes, Sagan collected his fifth second place of this year's race, without a win. His hair-raising plunge down the perilous Col de Manse descent halved the minute's lead Plaza had held at the summit, but it wasn't enough.

Did the descent live up to its reputation?

Geraint Thomas (Sky) followed in some famous skidmarks when he was bundled off the road at a right-hander by a

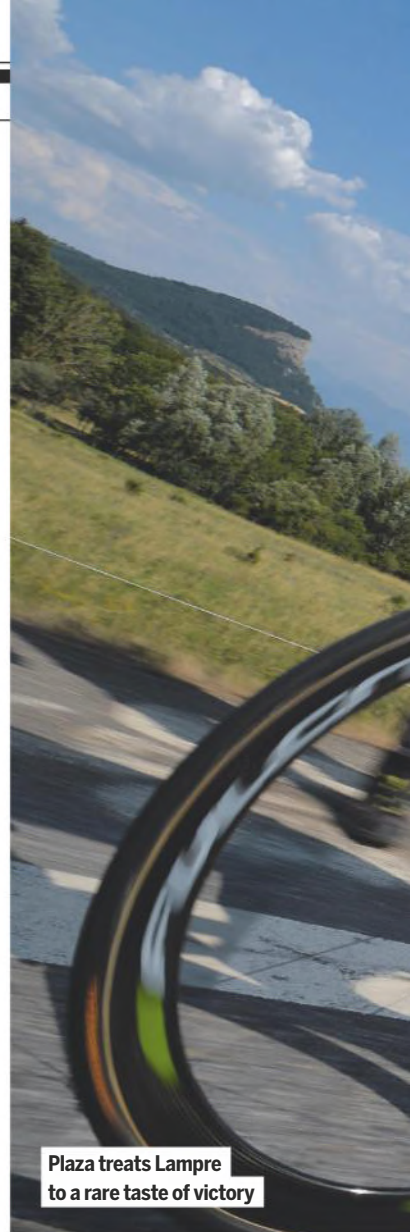
hopelessly over-committed Warren Barguil (Giant-Alpecin). His trajectory was only arrested when he hit a telegraph pole headfirst. Amazingly, he was fine, and seemed more upset about losing a pair of limited edition Oakley sunglasses in the crash.

And of the overall contenders?

Vincenzo Nibali (Astana) launched one of his trademark 'freefall' descents and gained 29 seconds on the rest of the contenders. Alberto Contador (Tinkoff-Saxo) outsprinted Chris Froome (Sky) on the line, but for purposes of pride only.

STAGE INFO

WEATHER Sunny, dry, hot
TERRAIN Medium mountains



Plaza treats Lampre to a rare taste of victory

FAMOUS DOWNHILL TO GAP

Col de Manse lives up to its reputation

“Today was quite a nice day to tick off,” said Chris Froome afterwards. “It was quite stressful with the final, famous descent.”

Crowds on the descent were comparable to those on the ascent, with the famous Joseba Beloki right-hander, four kilometres from the finish, particularly well populated.

Vincenzo Nibali hit the apex of the historic corner brilliantly, displaying his descending skills

once again. Alejandro Valverde looked twitchy, forcing Froome to modify his line. The sounds of brakes squealing was notable, although that became less audible the further riders were behind the yellow jersey group.

There was only one rider who looked close to replicating Lance Armstrong's foray into the surrounding field: Peter Sagan.

In his quest to catch stage winner Ruben Plaza, he completely missed the apex of the





**Nibali free-fell
with unrivalled poise**

bend, yet still looked incredibly smooth through the corner. Without doubt, he was the fastest round it, too.

The corner is one of the toughest parts of the climb, the

surface of which is much rougher than it looks: the previous left-hander can be taken at great speed, but it quickly turns into a tighter, 130-degree bend.

This section is a perfect snapshot of the descent: in places, it's fast, open and straightforward. But when that changes, reducing speed while keeping a steady trajectory becomes a real challenge.

The case of Tejay van Garderen and Warren Barguil, whose tangle caused the chain reaction that led to Geraint Thomas crashing into a telegraph pole, proves as much.

Thomas called it a "very dangerous descent", but it's one whose reputation is increasing each time the Tour visits.

ON THE PODIUM



Chris Froome
Team Sky



Peter Sagan
Tinkoff-Saxo



Chris Froome
Team Sky
(Worn by Joaquim Rodríguez)



Nairo Quintana
Movistar

RESULTS

Tour de France 2015, stage 16:

1. Ruben Plaza (Esp) Lampre-Merida in 4:30.10

2. Peter Sagan (Svk) Tinkoff-Saxo at 0.30
3. Jarlinson Pantano (Col) IAM Cycling at 0.36
4. Simon Geschke (Ger) Giant-Alpecin at 0.40
5. Bob Jungels (Lux) Trek Factory Racing at same time
6. Christophe Riblon (Fra) Ag2r La Mondiale at same time
7. Daniel Teklehaimanot (Eri) MTN-Qhubeka at 0.53
8. Thomas de Gendt (Bel) Lotto-Soudal at 1.00
9. Luis Angel Mate (Esp) Cofidis at 1.22
10. Thomas Voeckler (Fra) Europcar at same time

Others

24. Vincenzo Nibali (Ita) Astana at 17.44
25. Alberto Contador (Esp) Tinkoff-Saxo at 18.12
28. Chris Froome (GBR) Team Sky at same time
32. Nairo Quintana (Col) Movistar at same time
34. Geraint Thomas (GBR) Team Sky at 18:50

Overall classification after stage 11

1. Chris Froome (GBR) Team Sky in 64:47.16
2. Nairo Quintana (Col) Movistar at 3.10
3. Tejay van Garderen (USA) BMC Racing at 3.32
4. Alejandro Valverde (Esp) Movistar at 4.02
5. Alberto Contador (Esp) Tinkoff-Saxo at 4.23
6. Geraint Thomas (GBR) Team Sky at 5.32
7. Robert Gesink (Ned) LottoNL-Jumbo at 6.23
8. Vincenzo Nibali (Ita) Astana at 7.49
9. Bauke Mollema (Ned) Trek Factory Racing at 8.53
10. Warren Barguil (Fra) Giant-Alpecin at 11.03

Other

12. Romain Bardet (Fra) AG2R-La Mondiale at 13.10

Stage 16 In pictures



Top: Geraint Thomas suffered a spectacular crash after colliding with Warren Barguil

Above: Not-so-light relief: a rider prepares by taping the course profile on his bars

Left: Despite a blistering descent of the Manse, Peter Sagan was unable to bridge the gap to winner Plaza



Above left: Austria's Marco Haller (L) and Australia's Adam Hansen press on in the early breakaway

Above: High-spirited Belgian fans enjoy a spell of sunshine as they await their heroes

Left: Froome and Quintana reflect on the day's racing

Below: The road to Gap fittingly passes through a beautiful, craggy gap as daring high-climbers relish their premium viewing spot



Do you need carbon-soled shoes?

Carbon-fibre soles have become the norm for high-quality road bike shoes, but what benefits do they actually provide?

Just as having a carbon bike frame usually indicates a rider is quite serious about their cycling, carbon-soled shoes have likewise become a sign of dedication and aspiration. With prices of these shoes dropping well below £100, there seems little reason not to buy a pair. But are they always the best option?

As always, it's a case of different strokes for different folks. Does performance rule all, or is comfort a factor for most, such as touring cyclists who need all-day comfort?

Many carbon-soled cycling shoes offer next to no comfort. They are designed first and foremost to offer a rigid pedalling platform, albeit with a certain degree of flex. Accurate fitting and supportive footbed construction improve on-the-bike comfort.

So what are the benefits of carbon soles? The first and most obvious is stiffness. Unlike other sole materials that

flex more and therefore lose some of the energy that the rider puts into the pedals, carbon transfers the maximum amount of rider effort into pedalling force.

Is carbon necessary?

For racers and serious cyclists, pedalling efficiency is paramount, obviously. However, for some road riders — especially new and leisure cyclists — non-carbon soles may have benefits, especially in terms of cost. Even at sub-£100 levels, carbon-soled may seem prohibitively expensive to riders taking their first tentative pedal turns on a road bike, so other options offer good performance and greater affordability.

When Cube launched its debut range of road shoes last year, it opted for a reinforced nylon sole (see 'No' box below), which it felt offered the best balance of performance and price.

"We think it is all about the target group of the shoes," Cube's shoe



Carbon soles offer greater stiffness, albeit at a price

designer Norman Ebelt says. "For an average rider a reinforced nylon outsole is stiff enough."

Even so, although Ebelt is happy with his resulting products, he acknowledges the benefits of carbon. "For a good amateur or professional rider, a carbon outsole makes definite sense and is very important for good power transmission.

"For our new road models, which we will launch at the Eurobike show later this year, we have specified carbon outsoles. Of course, the retail price of these shoes will be higher than for the nylon outsole shoes."

Yes



Clas Nordström

Shimano Europe category manager for cycling footwear

"If we talk about the benefits of carbon

soles, it's all about stiffness. Carbon soles allow for greater power transfer from the rider's legs, through the sole to the pedal, crank and transmission. Conversely, the benefit of other options is comfort, albeit at the sacrifice of speed. The added benefit of carbon is that the shape remains true for an incredibly long time."

No



Norman Ebelt

Cube's shoe designer

"We launched our first shoe collection last year at Eurobike, and for us it was

important to have well-equipped shoes for entry-level and amateur riders. These riders want to have very good performance for a good price. So, for our main target group for this first Cube shoe collection, a carbon outsole was too expensive. Instead, we used a good reinforced nylon outsole, which is stiff enough for entry-level and amateur riders."



It's not just a case of direct, efficient power transmission; often, nylon or moulded plastic soles are significantly heavier than their carbon equivalents, so carbon offers a weight benefit, too. But — just as not all carbon bike frames are equal — not all carbon soles offer the same advantages.

Pro-level offerings

Shimano has recently announced it will be releasing a new version of its flagship R321B road shoe at the Tour de France. What marks a flagship carbon shoe from a lesser option?

"When considering good carbon soles, it's worth noting not only the weight but the type of carbon used and the layering of the carbon, especially in the cleat area," Clas Nordström, Shimano Europe's category manager for cycling footwear says.

"And whether it's carbon or a nylon material, shape is crucial. An ergonomically designed sole, such as Shimano's unique Dynalast shape with toe and arch support uses bike

biometrics to create a stable and supportive platform across the foot and throughout the whole of the pedal stroke. Finally, the range of positions for the cleat to sit in is also a good indicator of a better-soled shoe."

To sum up, construction and performance aren't enough without comfort, so choose wisely.

OUR TAKE

The benefits carbon soles offer in terms of power-transfer are significant and well worth the extra financial outlay, especially for competitive or challenge cyclists. Of course, if using your road shoes for a variety of tasks, including commuting, it's worth looking at other options. More importantly, whatever sole type you opt for, consider comfort. There's no point having efficient pedalling if the cost in terms of enjoyment is too great.

HOT STUFF



Mason Resolution Ultegra Hydro

Dom Mason launched his new bike brand earlier this year and we've got his steel Resolution model in for test. It's good-looking with internal cable routing, Ultegra groupset, hydraulic disc brakes and Hunt wheels shod with 28mm tyres. www.masoncycles.cc
£3,195

Test report: September

Hoy Vulpine Summer shorts

With summer holidays on the way, these shorts are more for the beach-front than the road. They don't have a pad but they are cut with a gusset that ensures they are comfortable in the saddle. There are taped seams, zipped pockets, belt loops and a high back for cycling.

www.vulpine.cc
£65

Test report: August



Topeak Transformer RX pump and stand

Based on the track pump/bike stand from Topeak is this more portable version, the Transformer RX, which uses the same innovative design as its older brother the Transformer X. Being foldable, packable and lighter than the X, the RX should prove ideal for those short on space.

www.extrauk.co.uk
£79.99

Test report: August



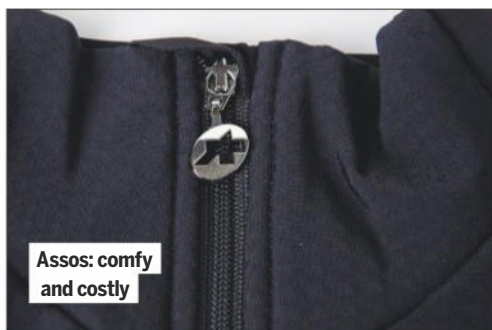
Assos SS.mille Jersey_evo7 £99.99

If you're after one of the best relaxed-fit jerseys on the market, this is the top for you. The lightweight design and ample ventilation makes it a great choice for hotter days, and it's an exceptionally comfortable jersey, with the loose fit leaving space for an extra slice of cake at the coffee stop. The three rear pockets and security pocket also have plenty of space if energy bars are more your thing. The quality of the construction goes some way towards justifying the £99.99 price tag, which some may argue is a lot to spend, albeit on a comfortable jersey with a trusted logo.

Henry Robertshaw **138g**

www.assos.com

8



Assos: comfy and costly



Fizik Antares R5 saddle £124.99

The Fizik Antares is a popular saddle that is favoured by many professional riders, including Chris Froome. According to Fizik's Spine Concept guidelines it will best suit 'chameleons' — riders with medium levels of flexibility. This determines how much you rotate your pelvis and therefore where you put pressure on your sit bones. I would agree with Fizik's design; the Antares does seem to suit a more upright, Froome-esque position. The quality of construction and robustness is apparent with the Antares being handmade in Italy. It also scores highly on aesthetics,

with the suede and logos looking very smart. A nifty feature not to be overlooked is Fizik's 'integrated clip system' which enables you to clip in bags and lights with minimal fuss.

Oliver Bridgewood **198g**

www.extrauk.com



6

Huez Starman seamless jersey £95

Product of the week

The Huez jersey is designed to look like a T-shirt, so

it can be worn down the pub. Blending fashion with function, the texture of the garment feels nice against the skin and the quality is immediately obvious. The jersey features Q-Skin, a fabric that has silver ions embedded into the fibres for improved hygiene and hypoallergenic performance. It helps, with the jersey remaining more fragrant than non-technical fabrics.

However, the main selling point of the Starman jersey is fit, which is like a second skin. Owing to a clever laser-cut one-piece construction the fit of the sleeves is especially impressive. Silicone grippers on the arms and hem do an excellent job of holding everything in place. The jersey doesn't feature a zip, which we suspect is trade-off against the superb fit. Oliver Bridgewood **188g**

www.huez.co.uk



9

Sock Guy Crew 6in tartan socks £9.95

As cycling has boomed, so has the desire for some cyclists to stand out from the crowd. From my own experiences wearing these socks, you will definitely get noticed. Sock Guy's variety of six-inch ribbed cuff socks easily fall in the current style of long socks. Sock Guy claims all of its socks use its 'Stretch-to-Fit' sizing system and its 'Easy-fit' cuff for a great fit on any foot. Well,

my experience was that the socks are initially a little difficult to get on, but once on they feel good whether riding or in everyday life.

Overall, these socks are comfortable to wear, look like they are pretty durable, and have a quality finish. *Chris Hovenden*

47g

www.
silver-
fish-uk.
com

8



Selev Doc helmet £95

Selev's Doc helmet has plenty of vents, including an unusual fishtail vent up the centre, which is very large and helps ensure good airflow. It's got a rear cradle which pivots to fit below the base of the skull to give it a stable fit, and there's also a dial-type rear adjuster which has reflectors on either side. I found it a good fit for my head shape and comfortable to wear even in hot conditions. The strap comes with a chin protector which helps avoid pressure points and closure is easy to use, with a chunky clip which engages with an emphatic clunk. *Paul Norman*

282g

www.creazzo.co.uk

8

POC Multi D bibshorts £150

POC has built up a good reputation for producing high quality and fashionable cycling kit over the last few years, and there's plenty to like about these shorts. The bibs are well ventilated and offer plenty of support, while the large reflective

panel on the rear should improve safety. However, I wasn't convinced by the fit, with the bibs being tight at the back (perhaps due to the lack of stretch in the reflective panel), and the chamois also proving uncomfortable on rides longer than a couple of hours, particularly when riding hard in an aggressive position.

Henry Robertshaw

200g

www.2pure.
co.uk

8



Santini Mania mitts £34.99

I love these mitts. They look great and are seriously comfortable, with good breathability, and four colour options useful for coordinating with existing kit. Other mitts can rub, pinch between fingers and get sweaty, but the Manias are a pleasure. The palms feature a really attractive and tactile white dot pattern, which is anti-slip, in addition to a good degree of anti-shock padding. When hayfever strikes, the 'snot patch' on the back of the glove is really soft. The Manias have stood up well to five months of riding and washing, with minimal wear. The only thing that prevents a perfect 10 is the price. £34.99 for a pair of mitts is hard to justify even with the high quality.

Oliver Bridgewood 42g

www.fisheroutdoor.co.uk

9

LONG TERM TEST

Three months later

Bontrager Race Windshell Jacket £44.99

This jacket has really come into its own with the recent unpredictable weather. Perfect for keeping the chill off if you're heading out for a ride before work, it's also water resistant so can be stuffed down to fit into your back pocket on days where there's a chance of a shower. *HR*

www.bontrager.com

9

Combat
unpredictable
climes



Can't live without

Shimano Di2 charger £74.99

It was a little embarrassing heading out on the lunchtime ride with my brand new test bike, only to get halfway round and be limited to the little ring on 'get home mode' that all Shimano electronic groupsets have installed. Needless to say a Di2 charger is something I can't live without. *SL*

www.madison.co.uk



Get charged
or go home

Vitus Vitesse Evo Team £2,999.99

Tested by: Paul Norman | Miles ridden: 400 |
Size tested: 54cm | Weight: 7.36kg/16.23lb

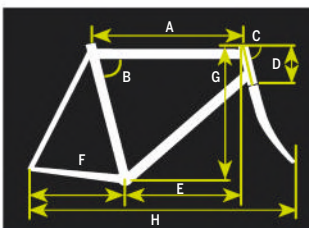
Vitus is a brand with a long history in cycle racing. A name closely associated with Sean Kelly, who rode Vitus bikes to many of his victories in the 1980s, it was bought by Chain Reaction Cycles in 2011 and is sold exclusively online. Chain Reaction has

extended the Vitus bike line-up to well-regarded mountain bikes as well as four road bike ranges at a variety of price points. The Vitesse Evo Team is the top bike in Vitus's range and is raced by the An Post-Chain Reaction UCI Pro Continental team.

Vitus Vitesse Evo Team £2999.99

Frame	■■■■■■■■■	9/10
Specification	■■■■■■■■■	9/10
Ride	■■■■■■■■■	9/10
Value	■■■■■■■■■	10/10

Distributor	www.chainreaction.com
Frame	High-modulus T700 HM-UD carbon
Fork	High-modulus T700 HM-UD carbon
Size range	49, 52, 54, 56, 58, 60, 62cm
Weight	7.36kg/16.23lb
Groupset	Shimano Dura Ace 9000/FSA SL-K Light chainset and brakes
Gear ratio	11-25t, 52/36 chainset
Wheels	Fulcrum Racing 3
Tyres	Continental Grand Sport Race 25mm
Bar	FSA SL-K Light
Stem	FSA SL-K Light
Seatpost	FSA SL-K Light
Saddle	Prologo Scratch 2



SIZE TESTED: M

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
54.5cm	73.5"	73°	14.0cm	38.2cm	40.5cm	54.8cm	97.5cm

Frame

Vitus has replaced its Vitesse frame for 2015 and the full unidirectional high-modulus carbon fibre build is on-trend. Viewed from the side, the Vitus's frame looks quite slender, but get aboard and the heft of the down tube becomes evident.

It takes up most of the space available at the junction with the wide BB386 Evo bottom bracket and makes a wide connection to the head tube. Its rectangular section hides its real size, a theme that continues with the seat tube, which tapers upwards from the bottom bracket. The top tube too is broad at the head tube and tapers towards the back as well as having a mildly sloping geometry.

There are the usual chunky chainstays, with the bottom bracket's width providing plenty of room for a wide junction. The seatstays are slender and all cables are internally routed and compatible with electronic groupsets; Ultegra Di2 is fitted to the £2,600 Vitesse VRI. Forks are thin in frontal cross



section and bend perceptibly when fitting or removing a front wheel, but their front-to-back width and the tapered headset bearings mean there's no lack of rigidity once the front wheel is locked in place.

Specification

Vitus offers the same frame

with an Ultegra mechanical build for £2,000, the extra £1,000 for the Team going on a set of top-drawer components. These start with the Shimano Dura-Ace levers and front and rear shifters. Everything else is FSA K-Force Light: bars, stem, brakes, seatpost and the



Chunky tube junctions at the bottom bracket



of the longer legs offered by the semi-compact gearing. Despite its racing credentials, the ride was never harsh and the quality frame coped well with bumps and vibration. The Vitus is comfortable for long distances too, with the saddle and seatpost combination being a particular highlight.

The quality Fulcrum wheels were light enough to spin up easily and there was no evidence of flex under harder efforts. The white hubs soon pick up dirt, though. Once bedded in, the FSA brakes were effective too, and, though they're rarer than those from the big three component manufacturers, they were a match in terms of leverage and braking power.

Despite the lack of a 34t inner ring, I didn't find steeper climbs too great an effort. Thanks to the bike's light weight and stiff bottom bracket, there was no lack of urgency in the hills. The Vitus



FSA brakes are a rarer choice but effective

also coped well with higher speed descents and around bends, with the excellent tracking lending confidence.

Value

The £1,000 price jump from £2,000 for the 'base' Ultegra model Vitesse to the Evo Team may seem hard to swallow, but it is money well spent. The quality frame merits the high-spec components and the complete package has a real performance feel. The only item perhaps worth upgrading is the wheels — although the Fulcrum Racing 3s are more than a match for the rest of the spec, a race-day set of deep-section carbon wheels would add to the pro look.

semi-compact 52/36 chainset. Bars, seatpost and cranks are carbon, the rest alloy.

The Fulcrum Racing 3 wheels come shod with 25mm Continental Grand Sport Race tyres and there's an Ultegra chain and 11-25 cassette. The Vitus comes equipped with a Prologo Scratch 2 saddle — an evolution of the popular Scratch Pro with a squarer profile and a dropped nose. The top component spec leads to weight savings too; we weighed the complete bike, minus pedals, at a very respectable 7.36kg.

Riding

Out and about, the Vitus's lightweight and quality build shone through. I found that I could really push on and it was easy to take advantage

The high-spec Vitesse Evo Team offers solid value

Verdict

Vitus has carved out a reputation for quality bikes with very competitive pricing, and the Vitesse Evo Team follows the trend. Although £3,000 may seem a lot of cash for a direct-sale, in-house brand, for your money you get a performance frame with a top-spec build.

This bike has the ride comfort to tackle longer rides with confidence and without really feeling the miles. On the other hand, it has the spirited handling

to make such a ride enjoyable and encourage you to push your limits and its capabilities on more challenging routes. The higher gearing gives some extra top-end on the flat and downhill while the lack of a 34t inner ring is a handicap only on the steepest ascents.

If you're an upgrader who looks to swap out components on your new bike, you'll be disappointed by the Evo Team — there's really nothing here that you would need to change.

But if you are looking for a quality bike and components, this is a bike that will serve you well for many, many miles.

9

For

- Great handling
- Excellent spec
- Comfortable ride

Against

- Slightly understated looks
- High gearing

Water bottles

Having survived several seriously hot rides lately, *Chris Hovenden* searches for the perfect bidon

What

The most common bottle size for bike riders is somewhere inbetween 500-650ml. This size will supply you with enough fluid for a couple of hours of riding (if you carry two) without the weight penalty of two 750ml bottles. With this in mind, I've carried out an extensive search to find five of the best bidons in this size.

Why

To many, a bottle is just a bottle — but there are many variations out there, with different brands offering different types of lid, nozzle, grip and plyability in a bid to produce a bottle that's quick and easy to use on the move.

How

I've tested five different bottles while riding in the recent hot weather: Rating the ease of drinking through the nozzle, the shape of the bottle and how it fits in your hand, and the ease with which it can be removed from and replaced back into the bottle cage. Filling it with energy powder without making a mess is also important.

HOW WE SCORE

- 10 - Superb, best in its class and we couldn't fault it.
- 9 - Excellent, a slight change and it would be perfect
- 8 - Brilliant, we'd happily buy it
- 7 - Solid, but there's better out there
- 6 - Pretty good, but not quite hitting the mark
- 5 - OK, nothing wrong with it, but nothing special
- 4 - A few niggles let this down
- 3 - Disappointing
- 2 - Poor, approach with caution
- 1 - Terrible, do not buy this product

Camelbak Podium £8.99

CamelBak's reputation was founded on the strength of its hydration packs, but its water bottles are by no means run-of-the-mill. The Podium is the same bottle being used by Cannondale-Garmin in the Tour de France. CamelBak's patented spill-proof Jet Valve, it is claimed, removes the need to fiddle around with a nozzle or cap before drinking. This is a good design, and once you've mastered not squeezing too hard — and subsequently almost drowning in energy drink — it works brilliantly. You can also use the lockout switch to prevent leakage in transit. To promote hygiene, the nozzle can be removed for cleaning. The bottle is easy to grasp when riding and easy to place back into the bottle cage. All in all, this is a very good bottle that largely justifies its higher price.

Weight
71
grams

9

Size: 610ml
www.zyro.co.uk



High 5 £3.49

High 5 markets itself as a UK-based company run by athletes. Alongside its popular nutrition products, the firm offers its own bottles. The bidon on test has an air of classic functionality, thanks to its shape and lack of embossed logo. With a capacity of 500ml and weighing only 65g, it is the smallest bottle on test and definitely fits the description of 'race bottle'. To assist in making up energy drinks, the bottle has volume markers on the side. As you'd expect with a bottle from a company that sells energy drinks, the opening is large enough to easily shovel in powder. The grooves on the circumference of the bottle top aid unscrewing the lid. In summary, considering the price, this is a good bottle that won't let you down. I'd happily use it on short training rides or an evening race.

Weight
65
grams

7

Size: 500ml
www.highfive.co.uk



Science in Sport Wide Neck £3.49

SiS supplied nutrition products to 24 medal-winning athletes in the 2012 London Olympics. Designed to make knocking up an energy drink a doddle, its bottle features markers showing how much powder is required for each of SiS's energy drinks. The wide mouth of the bottle makes pouring or scooping in powder easy. An interesting but easy-to-miss feature is that, by pushing the nozzle flush to the lid, you can lock the valve to avoid any leakage. This is a good idea to avoid spillages in your kit bag or car, but when riding, if you accidentally lock the valve it can be a little difficult to open. The bottle is easy to pick up from a bottle cage thanks to the indentation at the neck of the bottle. The SiS bottle does what you'd expect from a standard reliable bottle, and the increment markers are useful.

Weight
77
grams

7

Size: 600ml
www.scienceinsport.com



Elite Corsa £3.99

The Elite Corsa is the bottle of choice for several WorldTour teams. The mouth of the bottle is substantially smaller than that of the High 5 and SiS bottles, which meant more care was needed when making up energy drinks. Measurements run up the side of the bottle. As you'd expect with a bottle used by the professionals, it is easy to grab out of the bottle cage. The lid is secure and easy to screw tight, and the no-nonsense nozzle design works fine. Two of the Corsa's main selling points are its safety cap, designed to blow off if the bottle is dropped; and it is biodegradable which is no bad thing. If it's good enough for the pros, it's probably good enough for the rest of us. Taking into account its competitive price, this bottle is very good value.

Weight
91
grams

8

Size: 550ml
www.madison.co.uk



Fabric £11.99

This unique bottle was only launched recently and is not available until September. Fabric claims this is a revolutionary bottle. It is the most expensive on test, but this is undoubtedly in part due to the fact it does away with the need for a standard bottle cage. It's an interesting design, but it raised questions as to how secure the bottle would be and how easy it would be to remove and replace one-handed. The bottle is held secure on the studs and thanks to the grooved hourglass shape is easy to remove. With a bit of practice (and concentration) you can master putting the bottle on the studs while riding. The mouth of the bottle is wide, so adding energy powder was easy. The nozzle uses a one-way valve similar to that of the Camelbak. I'd be happy to use the Fabric bottle when riding alone and in sportives, but would be wary of using one in a road race scenario.

Weight
68
grams

8

Size: 600ml
www.cyclingsportsgroup.co.uk



FITNESS

How do I... boost glute strength

Working your glute muscles off the bike is as important as working them on it

Paul Knott

Finding time, off the bike, to work on strengthening your muscles promises improved efficiency and strength when you get back on the road.

Personal trainer Gareth Batson of Cynergy Personal Trainers explains how your gluteal muscles are one of most important muscle groups when riding a bike — and are often overlooked during gym work.

“The gluteus maximus is the largest muscle in the body and is often under-used. It is crucial to an efficient pedalling technique and, along with the quadriceps, provides the majority of power to the pedals.”

Wake up your glutes

The two other muscles in the gluteal muscle group are the gluteus medius and gluteus minimus, which are crucial for stability when cycling and controlling muscle contractions. However, your glutes can be one of the most inefficient muscles on a bike if they become de-conditioned by a sedentary office-based lifestyle.

One exercise that activates your

glutes is the single-leg bridge. Batson says: “A single-leg bridge is beneficial because it works the glutes, hamstrings and hip stability all at the same time, which is very beneficial to cycling.”

Single-leg bridge

The exercise also resembles a single-leg contraction, which replicates the pedalling motion in cycling, in contrast to other exercises such as squats or glute ham raises, where both sides contract at the same time.

Batson explains how to perform the perfect single-leg bridge: “Lie on back with bent knees, your feet flat on the floor and your arms by your side. Extend one leg, keeping your thighs level, activate (squeeze) glutes and push up so that your

shoulders are in line with your knees. Hold this position for three seconds and repeat on each side for a set of 12 repetitions.”

Remember, the most efficient cyclists are those who use their glutes to push the bike forward. That’s where the power comes from. The stronger and more efficient these muscles, the faster and fitter you will become.

Essential points

■ Your glutes are often neglected compared to other leg and core muscle groups.

■ Activate your glutes while adding variety to your workout by using other exercises such as squats and lunges.

■ The gluteal muscles do not just increase your pedalling power but also improve your stability on the bike.

DON'T let your hips drop during the upwards phase of the bridge. Exercising with poor technique won't improve your performance and could cause injury.

DO concentrate on contracting your glutes rather than other muscles that may be used. Your body will just focus on completing the movement rather than using certain muscles.

DON'T forget to stretch your glutes, which can become shortened and tightened after workouts and rides. Stretch them out by lying on your back and bringing your knee across your chest.

YOU
SAY

Squats, squats
and more squats.
Jon Keene

It depends on the individual... Generally, though, weight training and plyometrics.
Todd Geiger

DO increase the number of sets as your glutes get stronger. The exercise is hard at first but over time it will become second nature.



DO this exercise at work, at home or anywhere where you have a spare five minutes. All you need is a comfortable floor.

Kinetic chain activation. Make sure the right muscles are working when you train. There's no point squatting if you are using quads.

Jamie Halliday

Lunges, squats and side steps with elastic band.

Stephen Heslop

Squats and walking lunges with barbell.

Victoria Paterson

Every time you walk up the stairs, take two steps up and power through your heel with your toes activated.

Karl Hurkett

Things to do this week



Sweet potatoes

Sweet potatoes are packed full of complex carbohydrates which are perfect for slow energy release on a long ride, as well as being rich in antioxidants that help fight off illnesses and cancer. In summer, the beta-carotene content in sweet potatoes helps protect skin from sun damage.

It's easy to incorporate sweet potatoes into your daily diet. Have one instead of a jacket potato for lunch or add it as an accompaniment to your evening meal.

Go exploring before enjoying Le Tour finale

What better idea for this weekend than going for a long ride, discovering new routes and climbs, before settling down in a country pub to watch the pros battle it out on Alpe d'Huez and the Champs Élysées. Sounds like our idea of heaven!

SiS Go Energy + Electrolytes

Those guys at SiS just don't seem to stop! Here they are with another new gel, now with added electrolytes. At first glance, you would think they are running out of flavours to choose from. After all, lemon and mint wouldn't be a first choice among many cyclists. However, it works. In fact, it's rather tasty. Each 60ml gel contains 36g of carbohydrates as well as salts to aid hydration. This is not an isotonic gel, though, so needs to be taken with water.

www.scienceinsport.com

£1.50



The science of climbing



Ever wondered what it takes to complete a big Tour climb? *Andrew Hamilton* looks at some of the challenges faced by Tour riders and explains why winning a mountain stage requires incredible talent and guts...

The 2015 Tour de France is well underway, and by the time the riders cross the finishing line on July 26, they will have completed no less than 3,360 gruelling kilometres. For most pro riders, even making it to Paris is an achievement but for the leading riders the real challenge will come in the big climbs, starting with the 161km stage from Digne-les-Bains to Pra Loup, which includes an ascent of the 2,250m Col d'Allos. The three mountain stages that follow are even more brutal and it's these four big climbs that will determine the eventual Tour winner.

What is it about climbing that is so challenging and why are the mountain stages pivotal to the eventual race outcome? To understand this, we first need to talk about fitness, power and power-to-weight ratio. If you ride on a perfectly flat road, most of your energy is expended overcoming air resistance. The more power your muscles can produce for sustained periods of time, the faster you'll ride. This explains why successful track cyclists tend to be heavily muscled and powerfully built.

However, when the road heads upwards, the absolute amount of power at your disposal is not the only factor for determining performance; the amount of mass you have to move around — i.e. your bodyweight — is vitally important too. This is because moving mass uphill against the force of gravity requires additional energy. In other words, what really matters for mountain climbs is the amount of power that can be produced in relation to bodyweight — 'power-to-weight ratio' — usually expressed in watts per kilogram. Over a 20-minute period, a fit club rider can typically sustain a power output of around three watts per kilo of bodyweight. For elite pro riders, this can be as high as 6.5 watts per kilo — a figure that a club rider might struggle to sustain for 20 seconds!

During fairly flat stages of the Tour, most of the energy expended is in overcoming wind resistance. This means

that riders with the highest absolute power outputs should have an advantage over riders with high power-to-weight ratios but less absolute power. So why is the race nearly always decided by the mountain stages? Well, Tour riders ride in teams, often in the main peloton. This means that during relatively flat stages, riders can be travelling swiftly but their work output is drastically reduced because they're shielded from the headwinds faced by the peloton leaders or fellow team members. These tactics effectively give riders with less absolute sustainable power output a helping hand.

But when the road ramps upwards into the mountains for a long climb, nobody can hide from gravity. Regardless of slipstreaming or team tactics, it's each rider's sustainable power-to-weight ratio that largely determines how fast that rider will be. The differences in the riders' power-to-weight ratios can be relatively large, and this explains why the peloton tends to disintegrate because during these long ascents, with the best climbers gaining minutes on those who are heavier and less able to climb well. In a nutshell, when it comes to the big climbs, the fastest riders can really capitalise on their superior power-to-weight ratio, often gaining enough time to place them in contention for the overall race win.

Hot and sweaty

It's not just gravity that riders have to fight during a long mountain climb — heat and dehydration can present formidable obstacles, too. On flat terrain in the peloton, the average power outputs of riders are often very modest, thanks to wind shielding. For example, data from RadioShack's Chris Horner riding

stage one in the 2011 Tour shows that his average power output during the stage was just 175 watts and there were periods where his power output dropped to around 120 watts. With typical speeds of 30-45kph, keeping cool at these power outputs is not a problem.

Once riders begin a long climb, things change dramatically. The best climbers can sustain power outputs in excess of 500 watts — i.e. two to four times the energy output while riding on the flat in the peloton. This results in large amounts of extra heat that need to be lost from the body. Of all the body's cooling mechanisms, sweating is the most effective. As the sweat evaporates and leaves the skin, it takes large amounts of heat with it — leaving the skin significantly cooler. Just one gram of water evaporating from the skin's surface removes 2.2 joules of energy. To put that in perspective, a rider sweating at a rate of two litres per hour is losing as much heat as a 1.4 kilowatt fan heater produces.

The problem, however, is that during a long climb, not only does heat production rise dramatically, but average speeds are far lower. Climbing Alpe d'Huez,

“A rider sweating at a rate of two litres per hour is losing as much heat as a 1.4 kilowatt fan heater produces”

which riders tackle on the penultimate day of the Tour, even excellent climbers will struggle to maintain 20kph (12.5mph), which means far less of a 'wind cooling' effect. Applying some simple thermodynamics, it's possible to demonstrate that when riding through still air at 20kph (12.5mph), evaporative cooling via sweating is only half as

effective as at 50kph (31.5mph). In other words, compared to riding on the flat in the peloton, a rider may be producing as much as four times the heat with only half the capacity to lose it.

As well as profuse sweating and the attendant risk of dehydration on long climbs, many riders (unable to shed the excess heat generated) will experience a significant rise in core temperature (heat stress). That matters because increased core temperatures can dent performance. A recent study on cyclists found that just 16.5 minutes of hard cycling in heat

stress conditions was enough to raise core temperatures by nearly 1°C, resulting in 16 per cent less power, higher heart rates and much higher rates of perceived exertion. Riders in the Tour will undergo still more severe conditions — and after having already ridden over 100km.

Reach for the sky

The incredibly high effort levels and heat aren't the only obstacles facing riders on the biggest climbs of the Tour. Altitude gains are also large enough to become an issue, especially near the end of the highest climbs. At 2,645m (8,677ft) the Col de Galibier is the highest mountain finish ever used in the Tour. At these kinds of altitudes, there's a significant drop in air pressure (the air is 'thinner'), which means less oxygen is available to fuel the riders' efforts. Pressure drops from an average 760 torr at sea level to around 550 torr at 8,500ft. Meanwhile, the ambient oxygen pressure drops in parallel, from around 159 torr to 116 torr — a drop of 28 per cent. That's 28 per cent less oxygen available for energy production — enough of a drop to severely dent cycling performance!

Of course, you could argue that thinner air (that presents less resistance to the riders) might help compensate for the reduced oxygen content of the air, and to a small extent, it does. As we've seen however, the average speeds up the big climbs are quite modest. And because air resistance varies as the cube of speed, the effective air resistance at low speeds is fairly minimal at low speeds, even on the flat. During a climb however, most of the energy expended is in overcoming gravity, which makes the proportion required to overcome air resistance pretty insignificant. Put simply, the riders will pay a heavy price trying to climb in the oxygen-depleted air and they won't get much of a refund from the reduced air density and wind resistance.

Into the freezer

The highest climbs bring another altitude-related challenge — temperature. The laws of physics dictate that in the lower portion of the atmosphere (troposphere — up to around 15,000m or 50,000ft), the temperature falls by around 1°C per 100m of increasing altitude. So for example, at the summit of the Col de Galibier, the temperature will be around 26°C lower than that at

sea level. On a fine summer's day with temperatures at the coast of 27°C (81°F), the riders could encounter temperatures close to freezing point at the summit.

Rapid descent

Of course, these lower temperatures can work in the riders' favour in terms of heat loss during the gruelling ascent. But consider what happens if the climb is followed by a descent the other side. On a fast Alpine descent, riders' speeds can easily exceed 100kph — the thinner

Equivalent chill temperature

Estimated wind speeds (in kph)	Air temperature (°C)			
	10	5	0	-5
Equivalent chill temperature (°C)				
0	10	5	0	-5
8	9	3	-2	-7
16	4	-2	-7	-14
24	2	-5	-1	-18
32	0	-7	-14	-21
40	-1	-1	-16	-24
48	-2	-10	-17	-25
56	-3	-11	-18	-26
64	-3	-11	-19	-27

Above: Wind chill effects of various ambient temperatures and wind speeds



Preparing for the descent with an insulative newspaper



Dealing with massive changes in temperature is yet another challenge

atmosphere and reduced air resistance is a real advantage for attaining high speeds at this point. Now, the riders will suddenly face the problem of staying warm, rather than staying cool because of the wind chill effect.

A rider descending at 64kph or faster in calm air at 0°C (see box) will experience a wind chill effect of -19°C. In other words, the riders will lose heat as rapidly as if they were stationary in an ambient temperature of -19°C. Indeed, if the

riders have been sweating profusely, the wind chill effect can be further enhanced by additional evaporative cooling. So severe is the wind chill that some riders have actually suffered hypothermia during long Alpine descents. This explains the practice of riders snatching newspapers from the crowds as they reach the summit and stuffing them down their jerseys. It's not high-tech, but a newspaper covering the chest and stomach is an excellent insulator and can

When power just isn't enough

At 94kg, Magnus Bäckstedt is one of the heaviest ever riders to have taken on the Tour de France. His estimated calorie expenditure was regularly over 10,000kcal per day during the mountain stages. Bäckstedt's best Tour result was second on the seventh stage of the 2005 Tour, but in 2008, he was eliminated for being too slow on one of the mountain stages. Bäckstedt's maximum sustainable power output compared very favourably with his contemporaries, but his high body mass penalised his power-to-weight ratio.

Bäckstedt recalls: "With 100km to go, I was going OK. I could see the numbers on the power meter and they were normal for the kind of effort you need to get to the finish on your own inside the time limit. I think I would have made it too, but there was a really steep hill just before the finish and my breathing and legs went. It was like I shut down from the waist down and I ended up four minutes outside the cut-off. Everything about the Tour is just about impossible; you can't drink enough to keep hydrated, you can't eat enough carbohydrate to keep fuelled and you can't eat enough protein to keep your muscle mass. You start lean and finish like a prisoner of war!"

help prevent excessive heat loss during a high-speed descent. It can also be quickly discarded once the rider has completed the descent.

Another challenge facing riders during a cold, high-speed Alpine descent is to maximise descent speed. On the one hand, the riders need to adopt the most aero position possible, with a flat back and elbows and knees tucked in. But they also need to be able look up to take the fastest racing lines, shift their weight around for cornering, and use the brakes too. All this while hands will be feeling numb with cold, with icy winds buffeting their faces. There's no letting up though; the lightweight climbers may have stolen a march on their heavier fellow riders during the ascent, but during the descent, physics favours the heavier riders, who will find it easier to reach and maintain higher speeds!

A man in a white and red cycling jersey with 'VELO' and 'BIRD RACER' logos is smiling while standing on a purple road bike. He is wearing a white helmet with a red stripe and a website URL. The background shows a blurred cyclist on a road bike, suggesting a race or training session. The scene is outdoors on a paved road with green trees in the background.

The day I rode with Wiggins

The pressure of being Sir Bradley Wiggins's minute man in an open 10 was intense, but Andy Birdsall didn't buckle — he relished the occasion and notched up a PB in the process

Simon Schofield

It's rare that an everyday cyclist shares the stage with one of the all-time giants of the sport and a national hero to boot. But that was Andy Birdsall's fate as he lined up for a club 10 as Sir Bradley Wiggins's minute man; he knew that the eyes of the cycling world were upon him.

"He is a real trier, a salt of the earth, larger-than-life character, and I was really pleased to see him getting the attention he got," says Birdsall's coach Kevin Dawson.

Birdsall, of Tickhill Velo, found himself thrust into the global limelight as Wiggins attempted to break competition record for 10 miles on the course near Hull, in May.

In truth, there was little that either Birdsall or Dawson could have done to increase the amateur's fitness in advance of the test — there was not enough time. Birdsall had only two weeks' notice of his date with destiny on the start-sheet.

Even so, the 44-year-old, a 100kg-plus, 100-mile-a-week rider, was determined to give it everything — and, on a borrowed bike, a full TT rig instead of his usual road bike, with clip-ons and some speedy wheels, he did just that.

"To be honest, I didn't change anything. I was mainly focused on looking the part!" says Birdsall. He logged a 24.52 for the ride, attributing a good 30 seconds to the wheels and struggling against a tough headwind (as did Wiggins). It was nonetheless a personal best.

Birdsall relished the experience and thought of his grandfather as he finished. "I call him my sponsor," he says. "He bought me loads of bikes as a kid and it would have been a very proud

moment for him. He'd have thought he'd finally got some return on his investment."

Birdsall has invested in coaching for several years. He thinks it's essential given that he has so little time to train — battling work, family and other commitments, as so many other cyclists do. He chose Dawson, a noted tester who's previously held the Best British All Rounder title — on word-of-mouth advice and because he gets on with him.

"He just keeps me on track. He is always there if I need advice. He's got such a pedigree and so much knowledge, which means I get a lot out of talking to him. He is somebody I really trust," Birdsall says.

Dawson provides structured training plans for Birdsall in the form of a weekly programme. "I really try my best to stick

to it, but some weeks are better than others. I think I probably manage to stick to it about 50 per cent of the time. I would never describe myself as a serious rider because I just don't have the time."

Birdsall makes the most of what time he's got. Coach Dawson is a firm believer in lactate testing — sampling blood from riders doing a ramp test on the turbo to find out exactly where the lactate threshold (LT) lies, the point where muscles begin to be flooded with lactate.

How it worked for me

■ **Motivation:** Being Sir Bradley Wiggins's minute man, with all the attention that brought, massively helped Andy Birdsall on his day in the sun (and the wind). But you don't get that every day. Look for motivation, like a target time, elsewhere.

■ **Coaching:** Many people think coaching is only for the pros, but it can be a rapid shortcut to being a better cyclist. Divert the money saved up for flash new wheels to a coach.

■ **Compliance:** Even though Birdsall finds it difficult to stick to his coaching programme all the time, he tries as hard as he can. Complying with advice helps you get better.

■ **Dedication:** Skipped rides aren't a mortal sin, but when circumstances mean you have an hour, not three, get on the turbo; at least the training diary gets an entry.

The most accurate way to work with LT is power, but heart rate, also a very useful reference point, is what Dawson uses to calculate training zones for Birdsall.

"If somebody gave me £1,000 tomorrow, the first thing I'd buy is a power meter, without any doubt at all. It's such a useful tool. But I do OK working to heart-rate zones," says Birdsall.

He also values the turbo, which can be useful for time-crunched riders who are used to working within training zones. "I know a lot of people hate the turbo but I honestly don't mind it. I get some music on. I'm in my garage and I know I'm not wasting time."

Dawson likes working with Birdsall. "He listens to what you tell him and takes it on board. He works hard and improves as a result," he says.

"A lot of riders either train too hard or too easy. With lactate testing, I can work out exactly how hard you need to ride to make improvements and when you need to back off.

"The do-it-yourself approach to training is well intentioned but it's nearly always wrong. I've made lots of mistakes coaching myself, and I probably still make them, and I've been at it 20 years.

"Andy's gone from being a very ordinary, run-of-the-mill cyclist to getting some reasonable times. That's the beauty of time trialling — you can keep on getting PBs if you work hard enough."

Birdsall will continue working hard and has his sights set on one of his favourite local courses. "The Hatfield course was my first ever 10 and I was just under 30 minutes. My best time now is 24.24, but I think I can get another minute off that."

Has his life changed since being Wiggins's minute man? "No, not really," he laughs, "I went to a local race and a couple of people asked me to pose for selfies. It was all tongue-in-cheek, but quite funny."

We say

Andy Birdsall named a power meter as the first thing he'd get if he bumped into £1,000 — and as a tester who's being coached and knows his lactate limits, he's right to want one of these gadgets. It's the missing bit of the jigsaw in his programme.

Training to heart-rate zones is definitely a great second best, but using the example of the run in the company of Wiggins shows why power meters are a great tool for time triallists. Battling against a headwind, Birdsall

would have seen his heart rate a good deal higher at a given speed (say 20mph) than usual. The risk is that he wouldn't be able to moderate and gauge his effort over the 10 miles in windy conditions as he fought to keep the speed up, risking blowing up early.

Using a power meter, as Wiggins probably did, meant that the effort could be kept steady, as 300 watts is 300 watts in headwind or tailwind, making sure to leave some gas in the tank for a final push.

The year of the Eritrean revolution

Long respected for its fine athletes, has Africa finally cracked cycling?

George Winter

This year, MTN-Qhubeka became the first African team in the Tour de France. We all know how African long-distance athletes have come to dominate endurance running, and now the title of a recent editorial in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine* asks 'African cycling: dormant to dominant?' Its authors, Johannesburg based Drs Jarrad Van Zuydam and Jonathan Patricios, note that cycling is the national sport in Eritrea, and local riders Daniel Teklehaimanot — best climber on this year's Critérium du Dauphiné — and Merhawi Kudus — who completed the Vuelta aged 20 — are national heroes.

Perfect transition

Van Zuydam and Patricios explain that, as with their East African running counterparts, the Eritrean cyclists on MTN-Qhubeka have low body-mass indexes, thin calves and long legs. A low body weight is

crucial for cyclists wishing "to raise their sustainable power to weight ratio, the major predictor for uphill cycling performance". In addition, being light-limbed means that when the cyclist is turning the cranks, a relatively lower rotational kinetic energy will be expended; the ability to pedal at a high cadence reduces the force per pedal stroke, making it more efficient; and having thin limbs improves aerodynamics by reducing the cyclist's frontal surface area.

Allied to these attributes is the fact that the Eritrean capital Asmara — where pelotons of young cyclists are common — confers distinct physiological benefits by being 2,300m above sea level. And with the authors citing a recent paper suggesting that African runners may be more fatigue-resistant compared to European athletes, it seems reasonable to speculate that a similar trait might in due course be found among African cyclists.

Great for...

post-ride recovery

Lemon, fennel and new potato sausage bake

This recipe is made with gluten-free sausages and it's perfect if you're looking for a low-calorie dinner. It's a fantastic summer post-ride meal that will help replenish carbohydrate stores and rebuild damaged muscle tissue.



Teklehaimanot: the Tour's first African KOM



INGREDIENTS:

- 1 lemon
- 30g golden raisins or sultanas
- 250g baby new potatoes, scrubbed and halved if larger than bite-sized
- Spray of oil
- 1 medium fennel head cut into wedges
- 6 chicken sausages
- Bunch asparagus, trimmed
- 2tbsp roughly chopped flatleaf parsley

NUTRITION PER SERVING:

282
kcalories

4.3g
fat

2g
salt

0.7g
Sat fat

METHOD:

- 1) Heat the oven to 200°C.
- 2) Cut the lemon in half lengthways, then cut one piece into four wedges and set aside. Squeeze the juice from the other half into a small bowl.
- 3) Add the raisins, stir and set aside for at least half an hour.
- 4) Bring a small pan of water to the boil, add the potatoes and cook for five minutes.
- 5) Drain and add to a medium-sized roasting dish. Add the fennel and reserved lemon wedges, spray with oil, toss and bake for 10 minutes.
- 6) Add the sausages to the tray and cook for five minutes.
- 7) Add the asparagus to the dish, turn the potatoes, fennel and sausages and cook for 12-15 minutes until cooked through.
- 8) Mix the parsley with the raisins and scatter over the tray with any juices. Serve.

**Time taken:
21 mins**

TAKE HOME TRAINING SESSION

Improve leg speed

CW has teamed up with Wattbike sports scientist Eddie Fletcher to devise some new training sessions. This week is all about improving leg speed.

Upping the cadence while lowering the resistance can help to improve peak power, sprint ability or endurance. Use a minimum cadence of

90rpm, even at a recovery level, and increase cadence through the training zones using a combination of lower gears and higher cadence. It helps to improve pedalling technique, which enables you to use a reduced physiological effort to produce the same power.

Therefore, you can use a higher leg speed, or a larger gear, or have the best of both worlds and use a higher leg speed with a larger gear.

**Time taken:
20 mins**

Time (minutes)	Cadence (RPM)
5min	90
2min	95
2min	100
2min	105
1.30min	110
30sec	115-120
2min	90
6sec	max leg speed
1min	90
6sec	max leg speed
1min	90
6sec	max leg speed
2min	90

Leg speed set

Ideally this workout should be done indoors on a turbo trainer as you can control the session and there will be no hills to slow the leg speed.

Start the session at 90rpm in a low gear (select a gear that would normally keep you in Zone 1- Zone 2).

Effort	You can	It feels like you're...	Use it for...	% Max heart rate	% FT power
Easy Zone 1	Chat freely	Warming up	Warm-ups, cool-downs and recovery	60-65%	56-75%
Steady Zone 2	Speak one sentence at a time	Riding along in the bunch on the flat	Long rides	65-75%	76-90%
Brisk Zone 3	Speak a few words at a time	Breathing deeply and working hard	Long efforts of 10 to 20min	75-82%	91-105%
Hard Zone 4	Say only one word at a time	Really attacking (perhaps on a climb)	Efforts lasting 2-8min	82-89%	106-120%
Very hard Zone 5	G grunt and gasp	Sprinting	Efforts lasting less than 2min	89%-MHR	121%+

The Tour of the Cornfields

CW
Difficulty
rating:
6/10

**This
year's
event:
Sept 6**

**60
miles**

**562
metres
ascent**

Matt Levett takes a ride along Cambridgeshire's hidden byways and tracks

The Tour of the Cornfields was certainly one of the first cyclo-cross sportives in this country and was in fact at the vanguard of the sportive boom. Eight years on it retains its low-key, reliability trial feel. The 2015 event is newly promoted by cycle clothing brand, and Eastern Cyclo-Cross League stalwart, Hackney GT, and it's still easy to detect the route's origins in the training routes of members of the Eastern Cyclo-Cross Association.

Where is it?

In rural Cambridgeshire, starting at the Wimpole Estate in Arrington, about 11 miles outside of Cambridge. It is close to the M11 and the A1(M) and easy to get to by car with paid parking at the estate, which is a National Trust property. There are railway stations at nearby Royston, Meldreth, Ashwell and Morden, served by trains from King's Cross, Cambridge and Kings Lynn.

Why ride it?

It offers a day of fairly challenging riding in some beautiful countryside. You are riding on bridleways and byways that literally cut through the cornfields. The occasional roads are small and mostly traffic free. Although on the increase, there are still relatively few of these cross-specific sportives, so it's a rare chance for a ride that will test your skills and fitness.

History

The first Tour of the Cornfields was held in 2007. The organisers claim that it's the original cyclo-cross sportive and there is little reason to refute that. Its origins lie in the cross scene in that region and it retains a pleasingly grass-roots feel. The connection with the local racing scene remains with the new organiser Hackney GT.



How to enter

Online through the British Cycling website www.britishcycling.org.uk/events/details/129681/Tour-Of-The-Cornfields. Information at HackneyGT.com.

HQ details

The Wimpole Estate is just off the A603 and only a few minutes' drive from the M11. Parking usually costs £2 for the day, this may be shared with visitors to the popular property but the Tour of the Cornfields starts before the hall opens. There are toilets and refreshments at Wimpole Hall.

Where to stay

There are several inns with accommodation near the event. The Hardwicke Arms in Arrington and the Coach House hostel and the Old Bull, both in Royston. There is also plenty of choice in nearby Cambridge.

Where to eat

Wimpole House sells snacks, cakes and excellent coffee. The local hotels also have restaurants serving a range of food from sandwiches to steaks and both have carvery options on Sundays.

Local bike shop

Royston Cycles is very close by on Royston High Street. There's also, as you might imagine, several bike shops in Cambridge, including a Giant store.



Linking roads with byways means precious little traffic

The route comprises of a mixture of terrain — narrow grassy bridleways, byways and farm tracks all linked by a few small sections of quiet country roads.

It would be easy to be fooled by the length of the Tour of the Cornfields — at 60 miles, it's pretty short by sportive standards — and also by the topography of the region. There is only 70 metres between the lowest and highest point of the course. But this is a tough 60 miles. There may be no epic climbs but a glance at the profile reveals how the route frequently undulates. Throw in the demands of the riding surface and the difficulty in maintaining a high average speed and you know you're in for a tough day. If it's wet then there is a whole different set of challenges.

This isn't just a straightforward gravel blast then, it's a proper cyclo-cross ride. So is it for you? First off, there is the unequivocal upside. A late summer's day of virtually traffic-free riding in some understated but beautiful English countryside.

But the riding can be tricky, tiring and at some points, frustrating. A good level of fitness and some off-road handling skills will come in handy. You encounter the first sector of bridleway very early in the ride and it can come as a bit of a shock if you don't quickly relax into your off-road rhythm. It's narrow, bumpy and grassy ("60 miles of this?!"). But after a short, sharp climb you are into terrain that represents the other dominant feature of the Tour of the Cornfields; wide, rough farm tracks. These are fast and fun but come with their own hazards. They are often based on and repaired with builders' hardcore so you need to be vigilant for loose bricks and other debris. There's a

lot of potential for punctures and cut tyres here, or worse if you hit something big.

These early sections really set the pattern for the ride — bridleways widening out into byways, linked by unclassified roads that make up roughly half of the route. Although these roads are still quite 'grippy' they do offer a chance to sit up and relax or to up your average speed. There is a beautiful stretch, of straight, quiet well-surfaced road at Ashwell.

The road less travelled

The absence of traffic should make for a relaxing day in the saddle but a few practical considerations should make your day more straightforward. First off, navigation: what makes this a great area for off-road riding also presents its own challenges. It's not just a case of following the obvious track, as signed bridleways criss-cross each other like road junctions. There should be cue sheets and some signage, but remember this is off the beaten track so a GPS unit would be a helpful tool.

Secondly, you're going to need to be quite self-reliant. There are fewer opportunities for technical support from the organisers and not that much in the way of infrastructure on the route. Make sure your bike is up to the task and well maintained, a cyclo-cross specific bike is perfect. Carry lots of spare tubes and essential tools and some food and drink.

If you're new to cyclo-cross this is a great, no-pressure introduction to the challenges; if you are a seasoned crosser it's an excellent taster just before the season starts. Either way, it's a great day's riding in beautiful, rural England.

ORGANISER'S TARGET TIMES

Route	Ave speed	Time
62 miles	17mph	3hrs 30min
62 miles	15mph	4hrs 5min
62 miles	12mph	5hrs 15min
62 miles	10mph	6hrs 12min

The challenges

1 The first off-road sector, near Croydon

The first bit of bridgeway arrives very early and requires quick recalibration from tarmac to off-road riding. It is narrow, sharply undulating and incorporates one of the steepest parts of the route.

2 Mechanicals

Tyres will take most of the punishment, particularly on the sections of byway. Go for a good all-round cross tyre. Carry plenty of tubes and a couple of tyre boots. A chain tool, quick link and multi-tool could also prove useful.

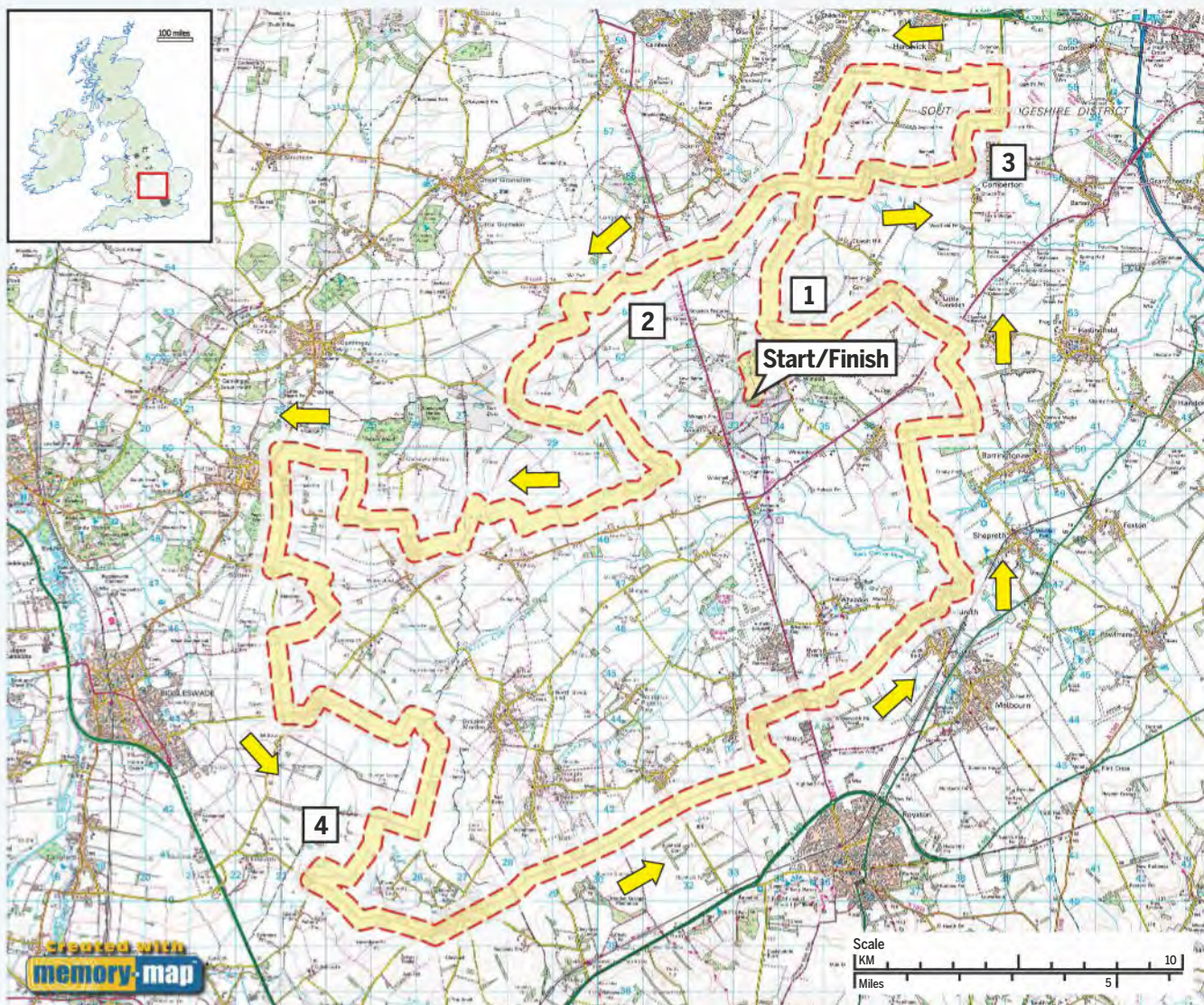
3 The run-in

The run-in features bumpy, debris-ridden surfaces, some loose gravel and a series of steep steps up to one of the highest points of the course. You'll need something left in your legs and the ability to keep your concentration.

NAIL IT

4 Hinxworth

The area around Hinxworth features some of the ride's best tracks — wide and fast but with a rough enough surface to keep things interesting. You can climb fast here and the series of descents can gain you time and provide some thrills but hopefully not too many spills. You'll need to look for the best lines; choosing between the grip and relative smoothness of the grass and the speed and bumps of the dirt. Stay on the drops and off the brakes, if you can. But be careful not to overshoot the intersections with the road and remember that the bridgeways and byways are shared with other users.



Event website www.britishcycling.org.uk/events/details/129681/Tour-Of-The-Cornfields Information at www.hackneygt.com

Torphins Typhoons

This Aberdeenshire cooperative has a different way of doing things, says *Trevor Ward*

The 30 members of Torphins Typhoons who have turned up for tonight's Tuesday evening ride are reminded of the club's three golden rules: 'Don't be stupid, don't be stupid, and don't be stupid.'

This is typical of a club that, in its two-year existence, has broken most of the conventions associated with the UK cycling scene. Based in the sleepy Aberdeenshire village of Torphins, the Typhoons have no committee, constitution or membership fees. "We're a co-op," says one of the founding members, Jon Entwistle (no formal titles here). "Members give us time rather than money."

During the course of the next 45 miles, I hear from various members how the club is encouraging more of the local population to ride bikes for pleasure, fitness and commuting.

"At village events, the club sets up a couple of turbos and invites people to have a go. We have activity groups for hill walking and orienteering, but the Typhoons are always the star attraction," says club member and village GP Neil Campbell. "I never see any of these guys in my surgery. They are a fit bunch."

We set off at a brisk pace up the two-mile-long Perk Hill climb. From here we would normally have great views of

the River Dee and the distant peak of Prince Charles's favourite mountain, Lochaber, but tonight the view is shrouded in wet, cold drizzle. It is the middle of June in Scotland, after all.

Informal ethos

The only female rider present is village vet Helen Miskelly, who tells me: "The men can get a bit excitable sometimes and drop you without realising — so much for chivalry! But it's a real incentive to try to keep up with them, and great for training."

I don't know whether it's our speed or the Typhoons' bright magenta jerseys, but a herd of cows in a roadside field is sufficiently spooked and starts stampeding alongside us. The pace quickens even more as we try to beat them to the top of the hill.

Club facts

Based: Torphins, Aberdeenshire

Members: 85

Formed: June 2013

Meets: Learney Hall. Tuesday evening training ride; Sunday club run with cafe stop; weekly turbo sessions during winter.

"It's the young guys, they've got no respect for their elders," jokes James Gifford, another of the club's founders. It's his 16-year-old son Ben who is doing most of the damage at the front, despite bearing the scars of a nasty fall during a crit at the weekend. With him are 16-year-old Ross McMurtrie, who was second in his age category at the recent UCI Cambridgeshire TT and Gran Fondo, and 18-year-old university student Brad Arthur, who tells me: "I love this club for the simple reason there's just no bull. Whether it's three people who turn up or a big group like tonight, we just get out and ride."

History

After a small group of villagers spent the winter on turbos watching *Sufferfest* videos in the village hall, they decided to form a road club and organised a meeting at the local pub to gauge interest. Two years later the Torphins Typhoons has 85 members and its own kit.

The original core decided they wouldn't charge a membership fee, have a committee or be affiliated to British Cycling. "There's so much bureaucracy involved in all those things," says Mike Dennison, who was one of those original turbo-users. "We're just a group of people who enjoy each other's company and like riding their bikes."

"We're a cooperative. If anyone feels strongly about anything, they can express that through

our online group. We don't need committee meetings. We have meetings when we are out riding our bikes."

Founding member Jon Entwistle, who is a British Cycling certified coach, says: "We wanted to break down the barriers — often caused by the tribal, insular and elitist nature of more established cycling clubs — and simply encourage more and more people to get on their bikes."

"My dream is to turn this area into a 'mini-Holland', where kids cycle to school, families cycle to the shops and parents ride to work."

There is some dispute as to why the club chose magenta for its jersey colour. Entwistle claims it was designed to make the club more "female-friendly", but fellow founder James Gifford says

the colour was chosen simply because it stands out more on the road, and they "wanted to be noticed". What's undisputed is that Gifford designed the club logo — a typhoon made from cassette sprockets.

As well as its weekly training and social rides, the club organises an annual trip to take part in a foreign sportive. For the last two years it has been the Tour of Flanders, but this year several members will be taking part in the Marmotte.

Achievements

■ Ross McMurtrie (16): second in age category for both TT and Gran Fondo at the UCI Tour of Cambridgeshire.

■ Mike Dennison: qualified for the UCI WCT road race in Denmark (September 2015).



■ Jon Entwistle: winner of sprint category in the 2014 Etape Caledonia, winner of the KOM at the 2015 Etape Caledonia, qualified for the UWCT TT Championships (second in age category, 19th overall) and UCI WCT road race in Denmark (September 2015).



Torphins Typhoons club run

Ride highlights

1 Queen's View

After a testing, two-mile long uphill start, the descent from Queen's View is long and shallow, providing a chance to regroup and get your breath back.

2 Forest Rise

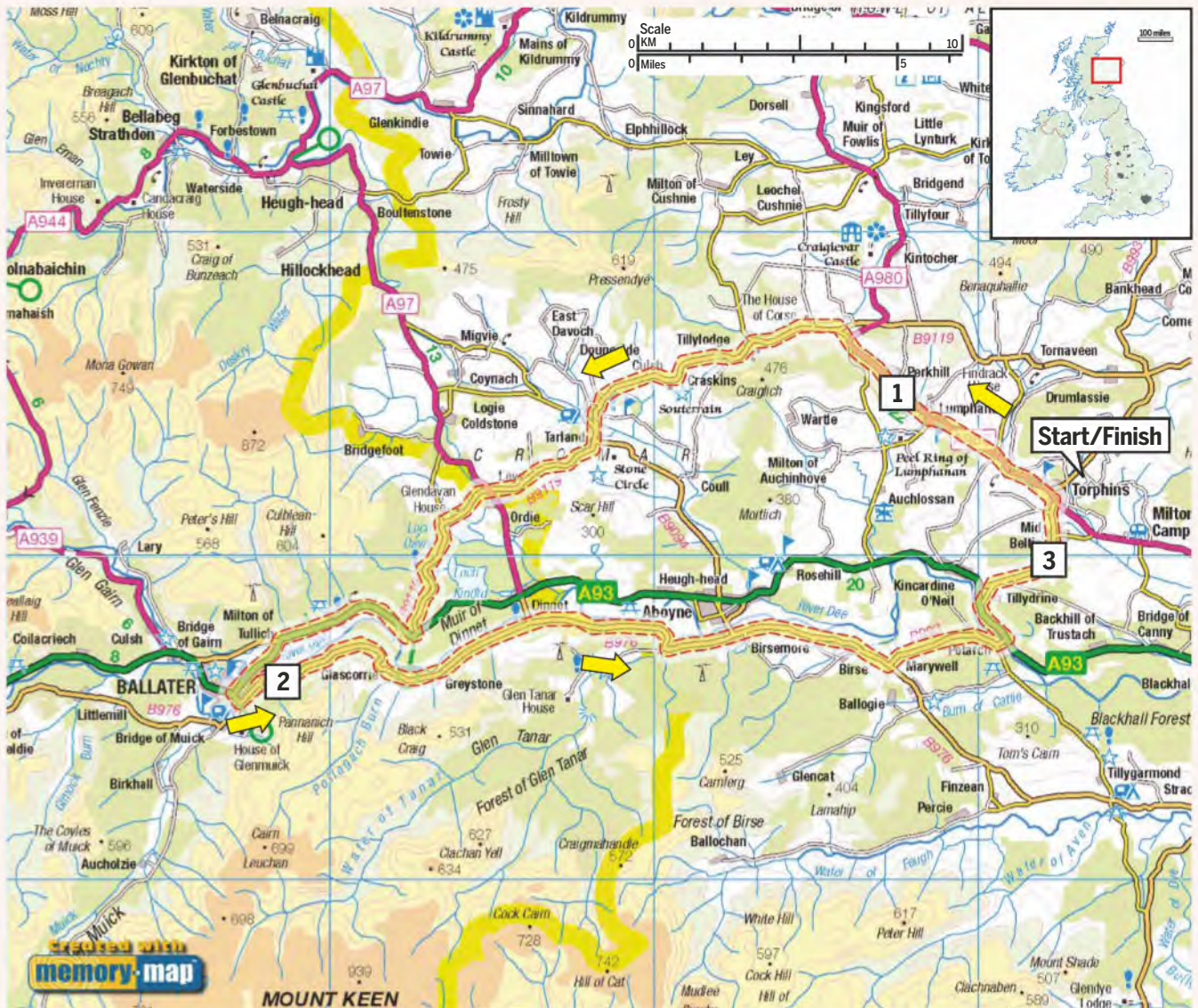
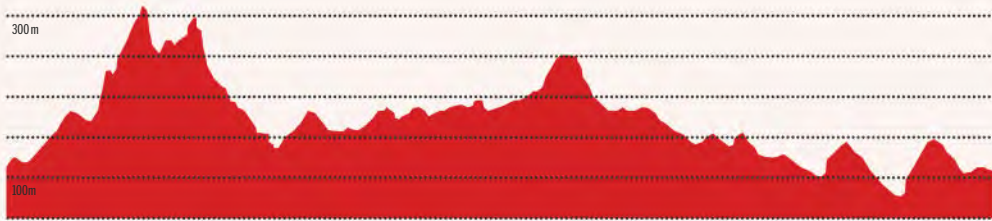
This is a stiff little climb out of Ballater once you've crossed over to the south side of the River Dee, and you'll probably regret that second slice of cake.

3 Tillydrine Bump

The final lump of the ride. It's a handy little short cut from the main A93 road, but it packs a punch. Still, it's all downhill from the top.

Favourite cafe

The Bothy Cafe in Ballater is the preferred choice of the Typhoons and for good reason. Manager Karen Bruce donated £100 to the club — used to subsidise the cost of kit for members — after riders regularly stopped off for breakfast during their Sunday club runs. "They're a friendly bunch, though sometimes they do smell a bit," laughs Bruce. The other star attraction of the cafe is its cakes: apple and blueberry or banana and caramel are the signature creations of Bothy baker Helene Thom — there's nothing better on a freezing Scottish June evening.





Ballater's Bothy Cafe is ideal for refuelling



The Typhoon blows into town



Fine coffee always delivers the goods

After a frenetic pace to Ballater on the banks of the Dee, we stop for coffee and cake at the Bothy Cafe, where university lecturer Richard Leece tells me he joined the club nine months ago because of its irreverent attitude.

"I'd cycled a lot on my own but was put off by the stony

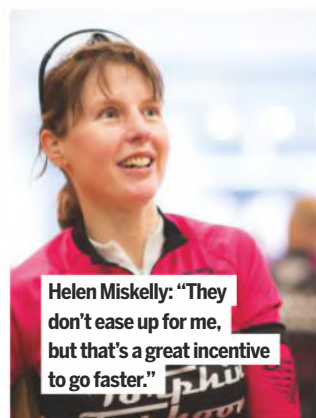
faced attitude of the clubs I saw on the road," he said. "They'd never acknowledge you, and it really put me off joining a club. But this lot are different. I have a laugh and my average speed has really gone up since I joined."

On the way back to Torphins, Brad Carroll,

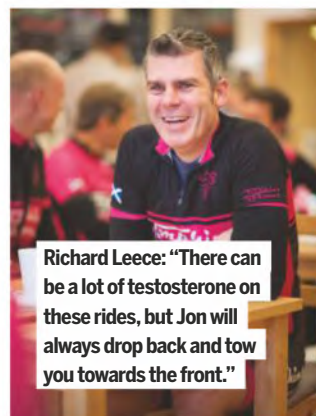
another founder member who happens to be the village postie, tries to start a chaingang. "Oh oh, looks like someone put too much sugar in their coffee," says the rider behind me.

No one takes Brad up on his offer and we ride home through the drizzle at tempo. ■

Meet the club



Helen Miskelly: "They don't ease up for me, but that's a great incentive to go faster."



Richard Leece: "There can be a lot of testosterone on these rides, but Jon will always drop back and tow you towards the front."



James Gifford: "We don't have a ride leader. We just have a bit of a chinwag before we start about where we are going to go."



Dr Neil Campbell: "The club's lack of bureaucracy and petty rules is a breath of fresh air."

torphinstyphoons@yahoo.co.uk; uk.groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/torphinstyphoons/info



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Broadwith so close to 24-hour record

Michael Broadwith (Arctic Taxy) was crowned national 24-hour champion after the title race in Cheshire last weekend, while Lynne Biddulph (Born 2 Bike) was again crowned women's champion.

Berkhamsted-based Broadwith, 37, covered 537.35 miles to win by an impressive 33 miles on the day. His distance was the second longest ever, and just 3.8 miles short of breaking Andy Wilkinson's national competition record.

"It was my first 24-hour event, and I didn't really know why I entered — perhaps I thought I had to win something this year!" said Broadwith shortly afterwards. "I'm in pain all over, and at one point I wanted to cry."

Meanwhile Biddulph covered 412.45 miles to secure a fourth consecutive title.

Elsewhere, Adam Topham (High Wycombe CC) won the Shaftesbury CC 50 in Cambridgeshire on Saturday, clocking 1:39.30 to win by almost three minutes from Jon Wynn (Northovers VT).

In Lincolnshire, Matt

Bottrill (drag2zero.com) took victory in the Sleaford Wheelers 25 at Donington with a time of 50.03, winning by 1.23 from Andy Jackson (Team Swift), who had won the previous day's Yorkshire CF 10 at Hatfield Woodhouse.

Border City Wheelers staged a 10 and 25 over the weekend, with their own rider Stephen Lewis winning the 10 on Saturday at Tebay in Cumbria, while he was second in the 25 on Sunday at Calthwaite as Steve Irwin (North Lancs RC) took the win.

Team Moda Anon secured a one-two in the Smithfield Road Race at Brampton, Cumbria, with Julian Pearson taking the win and Philip Trodden second at the end of the 75-mile race.

And in Hertfordshire Lewis Atkins (Pedal Heaven RT) won the Kenneth Lush Memorial Road Race, the 28-year-old holding off CC Luton rival Douglas Coleman.

George Bartlett (NFTO Race Club) edged to victory in the Cricklade Kermesse in Wiltshire on Sunday, taking the win by just two seconds from Jamie Penton (Dream Cycling).

And Sean Grosvenor (Ystwyth CC) won the Paramount CRT Summer Road Race at Leighton in Shropshire, from James Jenkins (Success Cycling).

In Kent, veteran Warren Jesse (Team Moore Fitness RC) took the win in the latest Surrey League Road Race, winning the 70-mile race at Ladies Mile from Andrew Boyd (Dulwich Paragon CC) with Andrew Syme (Primera Sports) third.

Road racing

Sunday, July 19

Men's Ryedale Grand Prix (Elite Road Series round six, Ampleforth, North Yorks):

E, 1, 2, 3: 1. Ian Bibby (NFTO) 93 miles in 3:50.49; 2. T. Moses (JLT Condor) +0.04; 3. P. Williams (One Pro Cycling) +0.07; 4. S. Lampier (Raleigh GAC) +0.10; 5. E. Rowsell (Madison-Genesis) same time; 6. M. Bialoblocki (One Pro Cycling) +0.25; 7. D. Fleeman (SportGrub KUOTA) +0.28; 8. K. Domagalski (Raleigh GAC) +0.37; 9. E. Dunbar (NFTO) +1.53; 10. D. Appleby (NFTO) +2.11.

Women's Ryedale Grand Prix (National Road Series round seven, Ampleforth, North Yorks):

E, 1, 2, 3: 1. Nikki Juniper (Giordana Triton) 39 miles in 1:53.54; 2. A. Parkinson (Giordana Triton) +0.15; 3. R. Nixon (Fusion RT) +3.10; 4. L. Massey (IKON Mazda) +3.13; 5. E. Holden (Giordana Triton); 6. A. Park (Giordana Triton); 7. A. Cobb (Aprire Bicycles); 8. H. Colborne (Bonito Squadra Corse); 9. N. Grincer (Fusion RT) all same time; 10. J. Erskine (IKON Mazda) +3.16.

Junior Women's National Road Race Championships (Ampleforth, North Yorks):

1, 2, 3: 1. Abby-Mae Parkinson (Giordana Triton) 39 miles in 1:54.09; 2. E. Holden (Giordana Triton) +3.28; 3. H. Colborne (Bonito Squadra Corse) at same time.

Kenneth Lush Memorial Road Race (Codicote, Hertfordshire):

E, 1, 2, 3: 1. Lewis Atkins (Pedal Heaven RT) 78 miles in 3:03.00; 2. D. Coleman (CC Luton); 3. T. Parnell (Cambridge CC); 4. S. Holt (Pedal Heaven RT); 5. R. Moore (Pedal Heaven RT); 6. J. Hennessy (St Neots CC); 7. M. Jackson (CC Luton); 8. M. Wragg (Arbis-Colbert Cycles RT); 9. R. McCarthy (Pedal Heaven RT); 10. L. Chapman (Richardsons-Trek RT).

Smithfield Road Race (Brampton, Cumbria):

E, 1, 2, 3: 1. Julian Pearson (Team Moda-Anon) 75 miles in 3:02.00; 2. P. Trodden (Team Moda-Anon); 3. J. Fowles (Manchester Bicycle Club); 4. A. Luhrs (Achieve Northside Skinnergate); 5. W. Corden (Mammoth Lifestyle); 6. B. Trotter (Macclesfield Wh); 7. M. Lythgoe (The Nab Racing); 8. S. Percival (GMC Fire Services); 9. L. Mullen (The Nab Racing); 10. D. Williams (Kuota-Spinerby).

Cat 3, 4: 1. Dean Penfold (MTS Cycle Sport) 56 miles in 2:20.00; 2. D. Beattie (Hawick CC); 3. S. Grady (GJS Cruise Racing); 4. P. Clark (Tyneside Vagabonds CC); 5. D. Scott (Paramount CRT); 6. I. Rutherford (The Edge Cycleworks); 7. G. Hill (Annan 2010 Racing); 8. M. Sproul (Rock to Roll Cycles Ltd); 9. J. Backhouse (Audlem Cycling Club); 10. C. Horseman (Rock to Roll Cycles Ltd).

Houghton CC Nissan Circuit Series round three (Gateshead College, Sunderland):

E, 1, 2, 3: 1. Ryan Davies (SportGrub KUOTA CT); 2. C. Anderson (Achieve Northside Skinnergate); 3. G. Tilgall (Greenwheel Cycles); 4. C. Lawson (Broom Wagon RT); 5. C. Humphrey (Achieve Northside Skinnergate); 6. T. Harcourt (NRG/Godleys RT); 7. R. Jones (Achieve Northside Skinnergate); 8. I. Cowan (Cleveland Wh); 9. D. Parker (Greenwheel Cycles); 10. B. Rowe (Achieve Northside Skinnergate).

Women 2, 3, 4: 1. Flora Gillies (Project 51); 2. C. Marshall (Team WattCycle); 3. L. Pheasey (PH-MAS VCUK Women's CT).

3, 4: 1. Michael O'Driscoll (Stockton Wh CC); 2. L. Heindmark; 3. R. Wright (Team WattCycle).
Under-16 boys: Matthew Dobbing (Stockton Wh CC)
Under-16 girls: Sophie Enver (Speedflex RT).

Saturday, July 18

Junior Men's National Road Race Championships (Ampleforth, North Yorks):

1, 2, 3, 4: 1. Nathan Draper (RST Racing Team) 64 miles in 2:48.56; 2. R. Scott (VCUK-PH MAS) +0.01; 3. Alfie Moses (HMT Academy) +0.02; 4. A. Braybrooke (HMT Academy) +1.06; 5. T. England (unattached) +1.10; 6. S. Balfour (HMT Academy) +1.41; 7. J. Mattock (Giant Cycling-Halo Films) +1.59; 8. O. Dudley (Manx Viking Wh) +2.03; 9. K. Bailie (HMT Academy) +2.05; 10. T. Chandler (Sherwood Pines) at same time.

Wednesday, July 15

Colne Grand Prix (Colne, Lancashire):

Elite Circuit Series round four, E, 1, 2 (one hour plus five laps): 1. Andrew Hawdon (Raleigh GAC); 2. M. Cronshaw (Madison-Genesis); 3. F. English (JLT Condor); 4. J. Mould (One Pro Cycling); 5. D. McGowan (Pedal Heaven RT); 6. W. Fox (Pedal Heaven RT); 7. I. Bibby (NFTO); 8. E. Oliphant (Raleigh GAC); 9. J. Tipper (Neon Velo); 10. M. Hester (One Pro Cycling).

2, 3, 4: 1. Lee Brown (Holmfirth CC); 2. M. Walls (Velocity Globalbike); 3. T. Pidcock (Speedflex RT); 4. M. Davies (Team Cystic Fibrosis); 5. H. Hardcastle (Speedflex RT); 6. A. Disley (Harry Middleton CC); 7. W. King (Prologue); 8. B. Harrison (Groundwater Engineering RT); 9. T. Hartley (Speedflex RT); 10. R. Ashcroft (VCUK PH-MAS).

Under-16 Boys: Harry Hardcastle (Speedflex RT).

Under-16 Girls: Ava Oxley (VCUK PH-MAS).

Under-14 Boys: Joshua Greenwood (Kirklees Cycling Academy).

Under-14 Girls: Maisy Vasic (Eastlands Velo).

Time trials

Sunday, July 19

National 24-Hour Championships (Farndon, Cheshire):

Men:	Distance (miles)
1. Michael Broadwith (Arctic Taxy)	537.35
2. S. Birnie (Willesden CC)	504.11
3. A. Kirk (Dulwich Paragon CC)	497.00
4. P. Jackson (In Gear Quickvit)	477.48
5. N. Holl (Stirling BC)	470.35
6. S. Edwards (RNRMC)	459.34
7. T. Mayne (Birdwell Wheelers)	453.38
8. C. Hopkinson (CC Desiregear)	452.02
9. M. Scholes (South Western RC)	449.43
10. J. Scott (RNRMC)	446.47
Women:	
1. Lynne Biddulph (Born 2 Bike)	412.45
2. J. Hobson (Born 2 Bike)	330.71

Sleaford Wheelers 25 (Donington, Lincolnshire):

1. Matthew Bottrill (drag2zero.com)	50.03
2. A. Jackson (Team Swift)	51.26
3. B. Harwood (Terry Wright Cycles)	52.02
4. L. Tunnicliffe (Clay Cross RT)	54.01
5. A. Colman (Arrow Cycles)	54.22
6. I. Guilor (Mapperley CC)	55.14
7. N. Palmer (Spalding CC)	55.17
8. J. Hargrave (Fenland Road Club)	55.28
9. J. Gelsthorpe (Peterborough CC)	55.29
10. R. Jelly (Mapperley CC)	55.31
Women: Jo Blackburn (Team Swift)	1:00.58
Junior: Reece Egner (Witham Wheelers) ...	57.18
Team: Mapperley CC	
(Guilor, Jelly, Peter Tuckwood	1:02.23

Performance of the week

Michael Broadwith (Arctic Taxy)

National 24-Hour Champs (Farndon, Cheshire)

Riding his first 24-hour time trial, the 37-year-old notched up the second longest ride ever and was less than four miles off breaking the national competition record.

Snowdon Sports supply domestic results and reports to *Cycling Weekly*. Please send your information to results@snowdons.co.uk or call 0114 232 5555 and we will do our best to include them in our expanded racing section.

Cat A: Neil Palmer (Spalding CC)	55.17
Cat B: Ian Guilor (Mapperley CC)	55.14
Cat C: Sean Hunt (Lincoln Wh)	58.26
Cat D: Gary Stevens (St Ives CC)	58.54
Cat E: David Smith (Sleaford Wh)	1:03.58
Cat F: Roger Sewell (Hounslow & District Wh)	1:02.39
Cat G: Michael Smalley (Witham Wh)	1:04.33
New Crane Memorial Trophy:	
Richard Hamblin (Sleaford Wheelers)	57.17

Border City Wheelers 25 (Calthwaite, Cumbria):

1. Steve Irwin (North Lancs RC)	54.21
2. S. Lewis (Border City Wh)	55.35
3. J. Wears (Team Jewson-MI Racing)	55.51
4. R. Bickley (Border City Wh)	56.31
5. J. Bateman (Pendle Forest CC)	59.01
6. R. Anderson (Border City Wh)	59.57
7. J. Cook (VC Cumbria)	1:00.45
8. M. Harris (Border City Wh)	1:00.51
9. G. Simmons (Border City Wh)	1:01.07
10. L. Davison (Border City Wh)	1:01.16

Veterans:

Over-40s: Steve Irwin.	
Over-50s: Andrew Dent (Pendle Forest CC)	1:02.24

Over-60s: Mike Westmorland (Border City Wh)	1:05.50
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Women: Zoe Whiteside (Lancashire RC)	1:11.39
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Eastern Counties CA10 (Bulphan, Essex):

1. Paul Hart (Southend Wh)	21.15
2. D. Lubin (Ciclos Uno)	21.36
3. R. Young (Team Vision Racing)	21.38
4. J. Long (Bishop's Stortford CC)	21.42
5. M. Ozdenya (Team Vision Racing)	21.49
6. J. Jenkins (Southend Wh)	21.52
7. M. Steers (Team Vision Racing)	22.23
8. D. Gilbert (Chelmer CC)	22.34
9. S. Smith (Redbridge CC)	23.08
10. G. Rudd (Redbridge CC)	23.09

Team: Team Vision Racing (Ozdenya, Young, Steers)	1:05.50
Handicap: Brett James-McCall (Ford CC)	15.19
Women: Julia Freeman (Easterley RC)	24.09
Juniors: James Jenkins (Southend Wh)	21.52

Saturday, July 18

Shaftesbury CC50 (Newmarket, Surrey):

1. Adam Topham (High Wycombe CC)	1:39.30
2. J. Wynn (Northover Vets Team)	1:42.14
3. T. Pettinger (Sri Chinmoy CT)	1:42.18
4. D. Bloy (Team Velovelocity.co.uk)	1:42.23
5. P. Gamlin (Northover Vets Team)	1:42.28
6. K. Tye (Velo Refined Aerosmiths)	1:43.37
7. R. Clarke (TMG Horizon CT)	1:44.07
8. L. Clarke (TMG Horizon CT)	1:44.24
9. D. Green (Team Velovelocity.co.uk)	1:44.58
10. D. Lazenby (Baines Racing-Silverstone Cycles)	1:45.02

Women: Alice Lethbridge (GB Cycles)	1:54.16
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VTTA North Midlands 25 (Sutton-on-Trent, Nottinghamshire):

1. Antony Bromley (Barnsley RC)	51.22
2. N. Cave (Lutterworth Cycle Centre RT)	52.49
3. J. Surtees (Team Swift)	53.17
4. C. McNaughton (Leicester Forest CC)	53.36
5. C. Twigg (Speedhub)	53.48
6. C. Pearce (Team Velovelocity.co.uk)	54.05
7. P. Greenwood (Team Swift)	54.27
8. A. Cooke (Peak RC)	54.56
9. P. Rayner (Welland Valley CC)	55.01
10. S. Wells (Flex-Tech Ettridge Cycles RT)	55.10
Women: Karen Ledger (Langsett Cycles RT)	57.58

The year's fastest

10 MILES

	Rider	Time	Course	Date
1	Bradley Wiggins (Team Wiggins)	17.58	V718	16/05/15
2	R Bussell (RST Sport Aero Coach)	18.17	V718	15/07/15
3	M Jones (drag2zerocom)	18.24	V718	05/07/15
4	A Bromley (Barnsley RC)	18.26	V718	05/07/15
5	M Sinclair (Lutterworth Cycle Centre)	18.28	V718	05/07/15
6	M Sinclair (Lutterworth Cycle Centre)	18.29	V718	15/07/15
=7	A Duggleby (SportGrub Kuota)	18.34	V718	15/07/15
=7	M Jones (drag2zerocom)	18.34	V718	18/07/15
9	J Layne (CC Ashwell)	18.36	V718	15/07/15
10	J Surtees (Team Swift)	18.38	V718	05/07/15

25 MILES

	Rider	Time	Course	Date
1	Matt Bottrill (drag2zerocom)	46.30	A25/11	20/06/15
2	M Bottrill (drag2zerocom)	46.38	A25/11	04/07/15
3	S Irwin (North Lancs RC)	47.08	A25/11	20/06/15
4	A Jackson (Team Swift)	47.16	A25/11	20/06/15
5	K Davies (Team NBCC)	47.19	R25/3h	26/04/15
6	M Bottrill (drag2zerocom)	47.28	A25/11	11/04/15
=7	M Bottrill (drag2zerocom)	47.31	A25/11	09/05/15
=7	K Davies (Team NBCC)	47.31	R25/7	10/05/15
9	R Bideau (Pendle Forest CC)	47.48	A25/11	20/06/15
10	R Bideau (Pendle Forest CC)	47.57	A25/11	04/07/15

50 MILES

	Rider	Time	Course	Date
1	Matt Bottrill (drag2zerocom)	1:35.54	A50/6	27/06/15
2	R Bideau (Pendle Forest CC)	1:38.39	A50/6	27/06/15
3	S Irwin (North Lancs RC)	1:38.49	A50/6	27/06/15
4	A Topham (High Wycombe CC)	1:39.30	E2/50c	18/07/15
5	C Taylor (South Pennine RC)	1:39.40	A50/6	27/06/15
6	D Green (Team Velovelocitycouk)	1:40.32	E2/50c	13/06/15
7	P Lawrence (Team Swift)	1:40.33	E2/50c	13/06/15
8	M Bottrill (drag2zerocom)	1:41.22	J4/16	13/06/15
9	D Lazenby (Baines Racing)	1:42.00	E2/50c	13/06/15
10	J Wynn (Northovers VT)	1:42.14	E2/50c	18/07/15

100 MILES

	Rider	Time	Course	Date
1	Richard Bideau (Pendle Forest CC)	3:18.54	T1002	05/07/15
2	S Irwin (North Lancs RC)	3:25.19	T1002	05/07/15
3	C Taylor (South Pennine RC)	3:32.50	R100/8a	05/07/15
4	A Topham (High Wycombe CC)	3:33.05	R100/8a	05/07/15
5	A Topham (High Wycombe CC)	3:34.01	H100/88	24/05/15
6	I Cox (North Lancs RC)	3:34.39	T1002	05/07/15
7	E Addis (Peebles CC)	3:37.44	T1002	05/07/15
8	P Gamlin (Northover VT)	3:38.41	R100/8a	05/07/15
=9	A Jackson (Team Swift)	3:38.53	R100/8a	05/07/15
=9	S Wilson (Team Polypipe)	3:38.53	R100/8a	05/07/15

Warrington Road Club 25 (Chelford, Cheshire):

1. Steven Hilton (Warrington RC)	54.47
2. M. Nulty (Glossop Kinder Velo)	55.05
3. I. Cox (North Lancs RC)	55.11
4. N. Skellern (Team Swift)	55.35
5. C. Edmundson (Wrexham RC)	55.36
6. R. Pollen (Ashley Touring CC)	55.46
7. D. Williams (Wrexham RC)	55.47
8. N. Haigh (Strategic Lions)	56.08
9. C. Siepen (Seamons CC)	56.10
10. R. Brennan (Preston CC)	56.12
Woman: Rebecca Holland (Chester RC)	1:03.53

Selby CC10 (South Cave, East Yorkshire):

1. Mark Jones (drag2zero.com)	18.34
2. S. Irwin (North Lancs RC)	18.40
3. R. Bideau (Pendle Forest CC)	18.43
4. L. Suthard (Weaver Valley CC)	18.57
5. K. Murray (Strategic Lions)	19.08

6. D. Grieves (GS Metro)	19.25
7. B. Maironis	
(Coveryourcar.co.uk)	19.26
8. R. Dean (Barnsley RC)	19.37
9. C. Whitwell (St Ives CC)	19.40
10. K. Hotson (Flex-Tech Ettridge Cycles RT)	19.41
Women: Jessica Bacon (York Cycleworks)	22.08

Yorkshire Cycling Federation 10 (Hatfield Woodhouse, South Yorks):

1. Andy Jackson (Team Swift)	20.27
2. D. Barnett (Drag2zero.com)	20.42
3. S. Beldon (Team Swift)	20.51
4. D. Wall (Out of the Saddle CC)	20.55
5. B. Harvey (Birdwell Wheelers)	21.00
6. D. Taylor (Bike Box Alan-Envelopemaster)	21.21
7. X. Scott (Bolsover & District CC)	21.42
8. D. Mullier (Harrogate Nova CC)	21.44
9. M. Wilde (HD Revolutions)	22.34
10. N. Parkin (North Notts Olympic CC)	22.36

Wednesday, July 15

City RC Hull 10 (South Cave, East Yorks):

1. Richard Bussell (RST Sport Aero Coach)	18.17
2. M. Sinclair (Lutterworth Cycle Centre)	18.29
3. A. Duggleby (SportGrub KUOTA)	18.34
4. J. Layne (CC Ashwell)	18.36
5. L. Tunnicliffe (Clay Cross RT)	18.45
6. D. Barnett (drag2zero.com)	18.50
7. P. Thirling (Stockton Wh)	18.56
=8. P. Lawrence (Team Swift)	19.03
=8. R. Dean (Barnsley RC)	19.03
10. G. Clark (High Wycombe CC)	19.19
Women:	
=1. Abby-Mae Parkinson (Giordana Triton)	21.11
=1. Amira Mellor (Paul Milnes Cycles)	21.11
3. J. Blackburn (Team Swift)	22.06

Tuesday, July 14

Port Talbot Wheelers 10 (Resolven, Neath):

1. Kieron Davies (drag2zero.com)	19.27
2. P. Jones (Severn Valley Cycles)	20.20
3. G. Boswell (Cardiff Ajax CC)	20.46
4. C. Jones (Ride Bike Wales)	20.59
5. C. Gibbard (Bynea CC)	21.04
6. E. Grill (RST Sport Aero Coach)	21.10
7. P. Hayward (Cwmcaern Paragon)	21.32
8. B. Phillips (Bynea CC)	21.34
9. R. Gambling (Ride Bike Wales)	21.37
10. J. Ford (CC Blaenau Gwent)	21.38

Team: Bynea CC (Gibbard, Phillips, Griffiths)	1:04.21
Veterans on std: C. Davis (Giant CC-Halo Films) +5.35	

Women: Melanie Sneddon (Torg Performance)	22.13
Juniors: Ethan Derrick (Bike Doctor)	22.39
Juveniles: Jack Lee (Maindy Flyers YCC)	24.49

Saturday, July 11

Media Velo 10 (Princethorpe, Warwicks):

1. Matt Clinton (Mike Vaughan Cycles)	19.47
2. J. O'Neill (Mike Vaughan Cycles)	20.25
3. D. Kiernan (Lutterworth Cycle Centre)	20.37
4. S. Harrison (Lutterworth Cycle Centre)	20.42
5. T. Ashton (Royal Sutton CC)	20.43
6. D. Mead (Hinckley CRC)	20.49
7. J. Middleton (Media Velo)	20.57
8. R. Gibbons (Hinckley CRC)	21.07
9. J. Stone (Solihull CC)	21.14
=10. C. Halford (Stourbridge Velo)	21.15
=10. D. Watson (Coventry RC)	21.15
Women: Liz Powell (Mike Vaughan Cycles)	22.33
Handicap: Christopher Jones/Annette Jones (Birmingham Midland CC)	23.25

Riders of the week

Abby-Mae Parkinson (Giordana Triton) and Amira Mellor (Paul Milnes Cycles)

City Road Club Hull 10 (South Cave, East Yorks)

The pair of 17-year-olds both clocked 21.11 for the V718 course, breaking the national junior women's 10-mile record, which has stood since records for that age group began in 1990.

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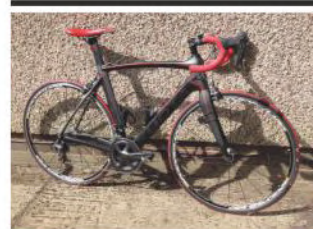
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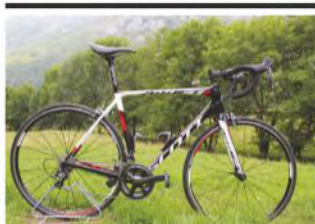
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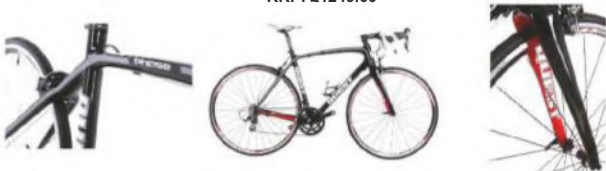
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Jan Dowsett



Dr Hutch

Being a better-than-average rider isn't all it's cracked up to be, warns the self-confessed 'quite good' Doc

doctorhutch_cycling@timeinc.com



Do you watch the Tour de France and dream of being a better bike rider? Do you comb through the accumulated wisdom of this publication's fitness section each week looking for the nuggets that will transform you, marginal gain by marginal gain, into the rider you know you deserve to be? Do you know, in your enormous throbbing heart, that you deserve a VO2 max of at least 90ml/kg/min?

My friends, let me tell you, I have been all the way to 'quite good'. I mean properly quite good, not half-shutting my eyes

and squinting at the power meter to make the '2' look like a '4'. The kind of 'quite good' where riders who get their pictures in magazines hold the door of the toilet open for you at the race HQ. The kind of 'quite good' that involves winning the occasional race but doesn't involve anyone other than you caring about it.

And take it from me, the thin, elevated air of 'quite good' is no bed of rose petals. The difficulties occasioned by talent and hard work are nightmarish in their scope and variety.

Superiority (is) complex

Here's one you haven't thought of, just for a start: you hardly ever have anyone local to ride with. You burn through riding companions without even noticing you're doing it. Their natural pride means they won't ever ask you to slow down; there will just come a moment when they're suddenly not there any more. Your natural concern for their dignity means you won't subject them to the humiliation of waiting for them. Instead, you'll pick up the pace a bit to make sure... and that's that. When they finally get home, broken by you into a thousand bits, they change their names and emigrate.

Here's another thing: you wouldn't believe how fast you drill through equipment. You may think a back tyre is at least a season's investment. Not if you're 'quite good' it's not. Within a month or two, your awesome, crank-bending power will have scrubbed enough rubber off the middle of the tread that the tyre's profile will

Dear Doc

I've entered into a conspiracy with a friend's wife. I'm helping her to adjust the calibration on my friend's power meter — first we are giving him better power numbers to make him feel he's making progress, and maybe make him complacent in training. Then, come the club's championships, we're going to suddenly reduce his apparent 'power' so that when he attempts to hit the numbers he's used to seeing in training, he tries too hard and blows himself to bits.

She's doing it because she wants to take revenge on him for something (I suspect it's buying the power meter in the first place). I'm doing it because I want to win the club championship. Have I crossed a line here?

Steve Grant, email

Dear Steve,
Winning the club championship seems to me to be something for which it's well worth helping to mount an assault on the foundation of trust that underpins a marriage. Well done.

Being 'very good':
a recurring daydream



have acquired the squat, square shape that I associate with my old PE teacher's head.

If you're 'quite good', people who are 'not that good at all' will ask you for advice on how to make the jump to medium-time bike riding. You can hone your answers, crafting responses genuinely intended to provide information and inspiration and even entertainment, yet no one will thank you for it.

That's because when someone asks a better rider for advice, they don't want to hear about hard work, long-term planning, detailed preparation or even (dear God,



“When you’re ‘quite good’, you burn through riding companions in no time”

no!) natural ability. They want something along the lines of: “Eat a coffee-flavoured yoghurt every morning and do a headstand.”

School of hard nuggets

They don’t want advice, they want shortcuts, the more voodoo in nature, the better. When you don’t provide them, your interlocutors despise you, because they won’t believe that you, of all people, got

there by any more noble a method. And who can blame them?

Finally, worst of all, if you’re ‘quite good’, you can see very clearly how much better it would be to be ‘very good’. If you were ‘very good’, having no one local to ride with wouldn’t matter, because you’d be rich. You could go cycling with Mark Cavendish in Tuscany every day; that would be better than having friends. Much better.

If you could just make the jump... but every time you ask for advice from a better rider, you get a pile of patronising twaddle about working hard, preparing carefully, and genetic pre-disposition.

How to... attack

It’s not necessary to attack to win a race. There is always the option of just grinding all the opposition off your wheel by virtue of superior ability. However, given the mind-numbing tedium of the latter, if you want to be popular, you need to attack. (See ‘Cadel Evans’, *passim*.)

First, assess how much va-va-voom you’ve got, especially in relation to how much everyone else has. Attacking when you’re on your knees with exhaustion is an excellent option if everyone else is worse. On the other hand, if you’re breathing through your ears, and the opposition hasn’t even opened its mouth yet, you might want to reconsider. (Corollary: always keep your mouth closed if an opponent is looking at you, especially if there is a whistling noise from their ears.)

Make sure you know the route. Many is the hero who’s attacked, dropped the opposition, and immediately got lost. It’s embarrassing, and ineffectual.

It’s better to attack from a little behind the leader of the group and gain some speed to pass him. That way, if your attack is an abject failure, you can disguise it as getting space to blow your nose.

Don’t look back immediately — concentrate on riding fast. But do look back at some point. Many is the attacker who has thundered away at it for several minutes while the entire race sits on his wheel sniggering. And don’t attack into a headwind. It doesn’t work.



Attacking: do it
at your peril



Velodromo Vigorelli

Chris Sidwells recounts the history of one of cycling's most famous velodromes

If the great climbs are places of cycling pilgrimage then velodromes are the sport's cathedrals. Few are more revered than the Velodromo Vigorelli in Milan. World titles have been won on this track, great races have finished there, and it was once the fastest in the world; the spiritual home of the Hour record.

Ten consecutive men's Hour records were set on its sleek, supple, boards. From Giuseppe Olmo's 45.090 kilometres in 1937 to Jacques Anquetil's unofficial — because he didn't turn up at the dope control — 47.493 kilometres in 1967.

The Vigorelli hosted four World Championships. The first in 1939 was held as World War Two broke out, and competitors were called up to return home as the competition progressed. In 1951 Britain's Reg Harris won the world pro sprint title there. Then local hero Antonio Maspes took two of his seven world pro sprint titles on the Vigorelli — his first in 1955, and his sixth in 1962.

That was the last world title series ever held at the Vigorelli. And by 1962 the track was no longer the finish of the Tour of Lombardy. The race had finished there since the track opened in 1935, but brave moves made on this Monument's hilly course were negated on the long flat run to the finish. Sprinters were winning, and the fans didn't like that in those days. However, it took the opening of the Rome Olympic track in 1968 and a publicity seeking Dane to end the Vigorelli as a world-class venue.

Ferdi Bracke of Belgium set a new Hour record of 48.930 kilometres in Rome on October 30, 1967. Then Ole Ritter travelled to Mexico City and smashed Bracke's record on the eve of the 1968 Olympic Games. Pundits said he did it because of Mexico City's altitude, and the Olympic track became the Hour record's home until 1993 — the more straightforward truth was that Ritter made his attempt there simply because a story-hungry press would already be at the venue.

Sadly, out of the record limelight, the Vigorelli crumbled. The boards that once sang under the silk tubulars of Fausto Coppi decayed. While the stands that rang to the Beatles in 1965, and hosted a riot at a Led Zeppelin concert in 1971, fell silent. Happily the Vigorelli was saved from the wrecking ball recently, and in 2013 it was renovated and reopened as a community velodrome.

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